

THE SHADOW OF STALINGRAD

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THE SHADOW OF STALINGRAD

Being the Diary of a Temptation

BY

COUNT

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CHAPTER I

Prisoner

THE WATERS of the Don and Volga reflected the sky of a scorching day. A light haze lay over the steppes as I circled high over them in my ME 109. My eyes scanned the horizon which faded into formless mists. The sky, the steppes, the rivers and the lakes which could only be seen dimly in the distance, lay peacefully, links with eternity. For a few seconds I gave myself completely to the joy of flying, that proud intoxication which is complete liberation from earthly ties. But this was no time for dreaming. For the expanse beneath me was the town of Stalingrad and it was the 24th August, 1942, the day on which the battle for the town, the climax of the summer offensive, was launched.

Far beneath me, like so many columns of busy ants, I recognised battalions, regiments, divisions, vehicles, tanks. the German troops advancing on the Volga and Russian tanks counter-attacking on both flanks. A sudden call in my headphone brought me back to reality: 'Einsiedel! Over the Pitomnik!' The Russians were behind the Stukas. Like meteors two Messerschmitts fell from the sky and crashed to the ground. The expanse between heaven and earth, which a few moments ago had seemed infinite, suddenly became quite small. A heavy oily vapour covered the ground. Our aeroplanes plunged into the few square miles of condensed space where Russians and Germans were locked in battle.

The day before, when the German combat squadron began its first daylight mass-attack on Stalingrad, not a single Russian plane had appeared. The Russians had twenty fighters at Stalingrad to every German one and yet the city had remained undefended, open to destruction. But now the Russian command had seen what

was happening. The German offensive began in the early hours of the morning. Neither the armoured Soviet mass-attacks in the north, nor the desperate tank sorties of untrained and badly led workers' regiments from Stalingrad, were able to halt it. At this point the Soviets put all their available planes into battle and an air-battle developed on a scale so far only seen in the West over the Channel. Every German Stuka, every combat aeroplane, was surrounded by clusters of Russian fighters which swarmed behind their own Stormoviks in close formation.

We threw ourselves into the tumult at random. A two-star Rata crossed my track. The Russian saw me, went into a nose dive and tried to get away by flying low. Fear seemed to have crippled him. He raced ten feet above ground on a straight course and did not defend himself. My machine vibrated with the recoil of its guns. A streak of flame shot from the petrol tank of the Russian plane. It exploded and rolled over on the ground. A broad, long strip of scorched steppe-land was all that it left behind. I turned and flew back towards Stalingrad. Only a few hundred yards to my left Russian bombers were making a low level attack on German tanks. Four, or perhaps five, hundred yards behind them were Russian fighters. What I did then was sheer madness: I dived under the very nose of the fighters. But the love of the chase and a sense of indifference had taken control of my reactions. Flying in a steep curve I managed to get behind the IL 2. The outline of a Russian machine appeared once more in my sight. I was dazed by the first hits. Hot engine oil spurted out of my oil tank and spread in a thin layer from one end to the other of my machine, clouding the view from the pilot's cabin. I turned on the spray which washed the glass. The view suddenly became clear again and was just sufficient to give me time to fly over a German tank and to steer clear of the IL 2 which crashed in flames.

My attention was diverted for two to three seconds and as I turned round to look for the Russian fighters I saw their blazing guns eighty yards behind me. There was a terrific explosion and I felt a hard blow on my foot. I twisted my Messerschmitt and forced it up into a steep climb. The Russian was shaken off. Once more I turned to the attack, once more I was sixty to seventy

yards from a Russian fighter but my guns were silent. The Russian had put my electric control equipment out of action. I turned westward and continued along the line of advance towards the Don. The line of advance? A broad, well-worn track of sand through the steppe grass, without a human being in sight—that was all. Surely the German supply columns should have been moving along it? A machine gun opened up at me. Behind it brown figures withdrew into the gun-emplacement. So this was the explanation: the German tanks had not yet reached the Volga and they were already cut off.

28th August, 1942

I was flying again. My leg was still bandaged but it did not hurt any more. It was afternoon and the sun was behind us as we flew over the Don by Kalatsch in the direction of Stalingrad at a height of 18,000 feet. Sixty yards from me a young corporal was flying his machine. He had only just arrived from Germany and his eyes were bright with enthusiasm and eagerness at being allowed to take part in the first flight over the enemy's territory that morning. Half-way along our course, several hundred feet higher, a Russian fighter flew towards us. He dropped down behind us and began his attack. Only very seldom had I seen Russian fighters start an attack of their own accord; that a single fighter should do this was most unusual. As we moved up in a steep climb to get into an attacking position between him and the sun, I looked round in vain for his comrades. The poor fellow seemed to have no experience judging by the slow way he climbed up after us.

'You wait,' I thought to myself, 'and in a few seconds you will be hanging on to your parachute—if you're lucky.'

At this height we were far and away superior to the Russians both in speed and climbing capacity. But I had misjudged him completely. The man who succeeded in avoiding my attacks through unparalleled acrobatics, and who managed two or three times to face me head-on so that we flashed past one another at arm's length at a combined speed of 700 miles an hour, was not

a novice but an old hand who used his knowledge with calm superiority.

For several minutes we circled each other without result. Grasping the stick with both hands I tried to force the ME into tighter and tighter circles as I followed the apparently effortless twists of the Russian. The centrifugal force drove the blood from my head and for a few seconds I blacked out. At last I succeeded. The Russian turned a split-second too late. I was inside him, when he crossed the line of my tracer incendiary bullets only twenty yards away. He toppled over in a nose spin and fell downwards. But again he had deceived me. Two miles below he pulled out and tried to escape to Stalingrad, flying low. At 2,000 to 2,500 feet we chased him and ran into a wild fire of the light flak. I gave my corporal a free hand to attack. Like a hunting dog he pounced on his prey but missed the circling Russian by yards and in his eagerness got directly in front of him. Immediately the Russian saw his chance, tore after him, fired--and at the same moment fell a prey to my last, already unsteady, burst. The Russian plane reared up, fell and exploded.

It was my fourth engagement on that day and this air battle had lasted only ten minutes. My eyes burned, my head ached, my shirt stuck to my back. I had had enough and wanted to get home. But just then I discovered why the Russian had sacrificed himself. Thirty Russian bombers and at least sixty fighters were over Kalatsch ready to attack our base. They must have reached it in under ten minutes. When we had started out from the base some forty JU 52's, the best part of our transport fleet supplying the Stalingrad Army, was lined up in close order. A bomb in the middle of these would mean that several divisions would be marooned. For four to five minutes I raced my machine all out to cut them off. Without a break I gave the alarm signal over the radio: 'Attention, mass attack on Tusov, mass attack on Tusov. All hands to! All hands to!'

I could already see over the Don the clouds of dust raised by the Messerschmitts taking off. We turned and hurled ourselves into the middle of the Russian fighters. The battle lasted for twenty minutes, thirty Germans against ninety Russians. I had no further

ammunition and could do nothing else than keep an eye on my novice. The Russians were finally driven back. Their bombs fell somewhere in the countryside. They had suffered terrible losses. Everywhere the flames of crashed aircraft could be seen, and parachutes drifting down. The ME's whirled around in disorder as they landed on the base.

The pilots gathered at the squadron command post and reviewed the engagement. Thirty pilots, their sunburnt faces, tense and full of expectation, their hair blowing in the wind, were standing before their Commander, the 'Prince' as we called him. His head had something of the expression of those medieval statues to be seen in the great cathedrals of Western Europe. This group presented a colourful picture in the red glow of the evening sun. One was dressed like a trapper, in leather from head to foot, another in fur boots and shorts, a third with a coloured scarf and embroidered Ukrainian cap - one might have thought they looked a little played out, if one had not seen the passion and excitement of the battle on their radiant faces and if one had not known what this little group had only just achieved.

Forty enemy planes were down for certain, and not one of the IL 2's had reached its base. I tried to imagine the same discussion among the Russians. How often it must have happened to them that a whole squadron did not return to base, and yet they seemed to become more and more numerous and to fly better from week to week. How they managed this in view of such losses was a mystery to me, and even a greater mystery when one saw the captured Soviet pilots who, as a rule, had such dull and primitive faces. 'The Russians are simply too stupid to run away,' Goebbels had written in *The Reich*. We had taken this as an insult to the front. But whence that country derived its strength, which seemed to increase with each day of the war, I did not know. It was like the fairy tale of the great undefeated giant who draws his unconquerable strength from the mother earth.

This evening our old Commander Lutzow took leave of the squadron. He had been appointed Fighter Commander of the Eastern Front. Only a few weeks ago I had raced behind him in a fighter bomber on a low level attack on the airfield of Lipzck,

north of Voronezh. When we landed I had asked him, 'Is it not a strange feeling, sir, to repay hospitality in this way?' Lutzow shrugged his shoulders and did not reply. For it was here in Lipzok, at the time when the Reichswehr was training in the Soviet Union, that he, like so many of our older and more successful airmen, had leamed to be a fighter pilot.

Our offensive in the direction of Voronezh was suddenly broken off and diverted to the south towards the Caucasus. Lutzow had called it another brilliant idea of the Fuhrer's. But when we were unexpectedly ordered to make another left turn, in the direction of Stalingrad, and our ground forces had been successfully separated into three parts, he no longer thought it the inspiration of a genius. And now a fourth part was on its way to Leningrad. In his farewell speech Lutzow struck a very different note. 'Gentlemen! flying for fun and seeing who can shoot down the most enemy craft must stop. The position of Germany is in every respect more than critical and the position of the air force is catastrophic. During the next year heavy air attacks must be expected in the West. And we have only two fighter squadrons there. Every machine, every drop of petrol, every hour's flying is irreplaceable. The easy ground life we are leading is completely irresponsible. In the air it is even more so. Every shot must go to assist the infantry; if there is no target for it in the air, every bomber which is available must be usefully employed at all times.'

He was right, both in what he said about our flying for the fun of it and about the general situation. But he was not understood. The officers grumbled. 'Low level attack on the Russians? He must be crazy. One hit on the engine and you are being roasted alive by the Russians. He can talk now, he does no flying himself. He talks of irreplaceable machines and yet he wants to sacrifice us merely to raise the morale of the ground troops.'

Of course these arguments too had some justification. Low level attacks, when they are not undertaken in mass formation, entail risks which are quite out of proportion to their effect. But was that a reason to fly home with our ammunition if there was no target in the air? I had long ago adopted the practice of chasing transport vehicles in the Russian rear areas, if only to give target

practice to the newcomers. But fundamentally the problem was insoluble. It was true that we were tackling five problems at the same time. Stalingrad, Leningrad, Baku, El Alamein, and air defence in the West. But Lutzow had at least tried hard to break up the fog of illusion which clouded the brains of most of us.

30th August, 1942

The Group Commander, my Squadron Leader gave the signal to start. The two machines ran along the runway. After two long hops they were clear of the ground and in the air. Under the wings of my ME were two new multiple cannons. I was curious to know what they could do. We were flying towards the Don. To the north, on the left flank of the 6th Army, the Russians were making fierce mass attacks. Regiment after regiment fell before the thin German lines. The troops gave the impression they were very demoralised. Numerous deserters painted a sad picture of conditions in the Red Army. These were labour divisions which, as was disclosed in a captured order, had been set up on the model of German labour battalions by direct order of Stalin. To justify this measure the order ran on the following lines:

'Many millions of our brothers and sisters have already fallen under the German yoke. Vital territories of our Fatherland have fallen into the hands of the German fascist conqueror. A further retreat would exhaust to a dangerous point the strength of our dearly beloved Fatherland. Therefore an end must be made to the disastrous idea that the surest way of destroying the opponent is to entice him farther and farther into our country and even if necessary retreat is far as the Ural. This kind of attitude betrays nothing but cowardice, faint-heartedness and panic. The enemy is not so strong. Comrades, the time of retreat is at an end! Not a square yard of our beloved Fatherland is to be sacrificed to the enemy. He who retreats is a traitor. Death to the German invaders!'

This captured document was regarded as a sign of the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union, and the order was given that it should be read out to the troops together with a new order to

launch an attack designed to cut the communications between Stalingrad and Kalatsch.

For this engagement according to the words of our Commander, all the tanks and armoured vehicles in the region of Stalingrad were said to be concentrated—altogether seventy in number. Certain that the Commander had misread the number I questioned it.

Did you say 170 or 200, sir?

'Don't contradict me. He snarled, I can read!

I respectfully beg your pardon, sir, I replied 'but I cannot imagine that having reached the climax of all our operations this year and it the peak of the battle for Stalingrad and the Volga we should have only seventy tank and armoured vehicles at our disposal. Perhaps there has been a mistake in the transmission.

But enquiries showed that this figure was, in fact, correct. The German tank divisions had been ordered to take the offensive at the end of 1942 without the full establishment of battle worthy tanks. Moreover the incredible marches which the Russian retreats had demanded of the German troops and Hitler's hectic rearrangement of divisions from Voronezh to the lower course of the Don and then back again into the great bend of the Don further contributed to weaken the German tank force. Furthermore our tanks as well as our aeroplanes were without the dust filters which were so necessary both in the sand of the Steppes and in the desert. The engagement at El Alamein swallowed up the entire production. As a result breakdowns reached enormous proportions. In the fighter force this shortage showed itself in that a fighter group of forty two machines seldom had more than ten machines operational.

We were over Stalingrad. Excited shouts in my earphones told me that not far from us the air battle had begun. Systematically my eyes scanned the air. Flugs with swastikas on them had been laid out as signals to show us that we were flying over the front. Only ten or twenty miles away on the other bank of the Volga lay the Russian airfields. The Russian fighters were already piercing through the blanket of clouds in a dive attack. One of them appeared to have lost his colleagues and arrived right in front of

us. My commander, Major Ewald, only needed to turn in slightly to get into position to shoot. He fired, and it was apparent that the Russian had been hit. But Ewald was already beyond the Lagg so I turned my machine after the Russian to complete the job with my three cannons. The major yelled into the radio 'Leave him to me, leave him to me!' 'Certainly, Major,' I replied. There was irony in this because it was not customary for us to address each other by rank when in battle. But this was not the first time that the major had played this game with me and it was also not the first time that he was too late. Before he was able to get into a firing position again the Russian had made a belly landing and the clouds of anti aircraft fire around us showed that he had not chosen a bad place to land. But Ewald had another idea. 'Einsiedel you have three cannons set him on fire!' The belly landing of the Lagg on his own territory would not count as a victory for him unless the machine were destroyed on the ground. His orders were too late as I was already flying to attack the machine on the ground but in my interest over such unnecessary experiments fifty miles behind the front I could not resist asking, 'But sir wouldn't you rather yourself?'

But then I fired. In the fire of my machine the Lagg broke up on the ground and went up in flames. I pulled up again. On the south side of Stalingrad where the Volga bends sharply towards the south east, twenty or thirty small quick Ritas and older Russian models swarmed like bees. We could not make out what they were defending on the ground for the Russians are masters in camouflage. There was no sense in our going for these small planes. They fly too low over the dangerous anti aircraft fire and they are too agile for our machines. The risk far outweighs the chances of success. But as we could see no other opponent in the air we nevertheless attempted a few attacks on the swarm.

The Russians flew over a lower brush along the Volga cliffs, dived and looped over it then turned their machines almost in their own length, and came at us head on. It was entirely a matter of chance if we hit the enemy. After one of these duels I pulled up my ME to follow a Rita I had already hit once, when a scorching smell suddenly filled my cabin. The liquid poured in a broad

stream out of my right cooler. A shot had torn it open. In vain I pulled at the handle of my cut-out but this old type of machine was not yet fitted with one. Flying at 2,000 feet, I could just get over the Zarepta hills. Hot oil and fumes poured out of the engine, the pistons worked harder and harder and then with a sinister jerk the propeller stopped.

I tried gliding towards the front. One after another the small compact machines of the Russians passed me. Like gravel on a tin roof their shots rattled on my rear armour. Keeping my head down I climbed on to the side seat to get out of the line of fire. Every movement meant loss of height. Anti aircraft shells hit the wings. The left cannon broke off. The machine was falling. Once more I attempted, with a violent heave on the stick, to pull the aeroplane up a little, but it hit the ground, bounced, crashed, rolled over, and then came to a stop in terrifying silence.

Twice my head banged hard against the instrument panel. Half stunned, and with great effort, I forced back the roof of the cabin, which had jammed tight, and jumped out on to the ground. Forty yards in front of me lay the fragments of a Russian aeroplane, scattered in the shape of a horse shoe. From the west, against the setting sun, troops in loose formation came over the steppes, apparently infantry detached from their units. From the Russian emergency landing ground, on the edge of which I had landed, shots were fired at me. Ground staff came running towards me. I put up my hands.

This was the moment which we had so often thought of, and been unable to picture clearly.

With raised hands I awaited the Russians. My eyes turned to the west. There, fifteen minutes' flight away, my colleagues would be standing on the landing ground waiting for me. It was all over. Here I was alone, not knowing what to expect. I looked down at my leather coat, covered with oil, at my well-worn flying boots and my pilot's gloves. Finally, I undid my belt and handed my pistol to the first Russian who came towards me. Without a word, he emptied my pockets—handkerchief, cigarettes, wallet, gloves—

he took them all. Meanwhile an officer in pilot's fur boots came forward. He held out his hand. A little golden star glittered on his chest. 'Comrade,' he said, rolling his r's. At last I could put down my hands. Greatly relieved, I took the hand he offered me.

With the air of an expert he examined the wreck of my machine lying sadly on the sand, with its buckled wings, bent body and twisted propeller blades. When he saw the little white lines on the controls and the cockides and Soviet stars, he gave an exclamation of astonishment. He counted them quickly—ten—twenty, thirty, thirty five—then he nodded his head thoughtfully, and forming the figure twenty two with his fingers, he pointed to the golden star on his chest and said something in Russian. As I did not understand, he added, 'I—hero of the Soviet Union. I didn't realise that this was an official decoration, given for special merit, and could hardly suppress a smile. But he seemed to take it as a sign of recognition and laughed with pleasure.

At that moment a lorry drove up full of pilots. The men jumped out and rushed at me shaking their fists. One enormous giant tried to land me a blow while jumping from the lorry, which might have cost me several teeth, but I ducked and the fellow, carried by his own impetus, fell over me, straight into the arms of the hero who taking him by the lapels of his uniform, pushed him aside and gave him a dressing down of the kind one used to hear on a Prussian barrack square.

I had to take a few more knocks and blows before the first excitement died down, and then interest was turned to 'professional questions. Why had I made a forced landing? How many planes had I shot down? What decorations had I received? Was I married and where was my home? All these questions were spoken in broken German and laughs and with childish curiosity. Finally the Group Captain gave the order to leave and I was taken to the Command Post of the landing ground. Here, twenty three steps underground, my first interrogation took place.

'Name and rank.' The Group Captain with the golden star put the questions himself. I hesitated. My turn had remained at my headquarters and I had no badge on my leather jacket, I had nothing on me which could give away my identity. I wondered

if it wouldn't be better to keep quiet about my rank and title. However, I decided to tell the truth. I gave my mother's maiden name as Countess Bismarck. The officer jumped up and shouted: 'Bismarck, Bismarck, Reichs-chancellor? You son of Bismarck?'

I explained laboriously that I was only a great-grandson. He went into the next room and I heard him telephoning, shouting the name Bismarck over and over again. I waited for further developments, somewhat puzzled. Opposite me a pilot officer perched on a bench stared at me incessantly. Suddenly he got up, grasped my left hand and raised it to his face as if he wanted to kiss it. It was my signet ring he was after. With a quick movement, he transferred it, together with my wrist watch, into his trouser pocket. With a threatening gesture he left, ordering me to keep my mouth shut about this little incident.

The interrogation led to my immediate removal. Blindfolded, I was pushed into a car and an officer with a drawn pistol squeezed in beside me as we drove off. I managed gradually to slip the bandage off my eyes a little. The car was moving down the steep bank of the Volga and into the streets of Stalingrad, where dusk was already falling. The streets were empty and lined with smoke-blackened ruins. Through the holes which once were windows, the dark red glow of distant fires could be seen. In a green patch between the ruins of huge concrete buildings lay a practically undamaged Heinkel III. I recognised the badge of the Löwen Squadron. I wondered where my comrades had been taken.

With my face to the wall, I had to stand for hours in a dreary office. One Russian offered me a chair, another hit me so that I fell down. They interrogated me again in the night. The house shook as bombs fell near by. At last I was taken into the street where a lorry and several soldiers were waiting. 'You officer; I officer— We comrades,' said one of them and slapped me on the back. A small of vodka gave away his condition.

It seemed an endless journey through Stalingrad that night, particularly as the Russians had their Tommy guns dug into my ribs, and I was afraid each time the car bumped that one of them would go off.

In the basement of a large tenement house, I lay down on the

wire mesh of an iron bedstead. Later, with a guard on either side, I stumbled through dark passages where resting soldiers and civilians, male and female, were copulating shamelessly.

The officer who smelt of vodka was sitting in front of me. Slit-eyed Mongols and Cossacks sat beside me. The Russians were not unfriendly. Two of them spoke broken German. I again had to answer innumerable questions about my personal life and about Germany. They had the same illusions about us that we had about them. Gradually, the conversation took a political turn.

'Why did you attack us? What have we done to you? What do you want at Stalingrad?'

If only I had known the proper answers I thought to myself. They waited a little and then repeated their questions. I realised that I could not get out of replying.

'We Germans have nothing against the Russians,' I began self-consciously. 'There has never been a feeling of hostility against the Russians among the German people. Against the French perhaps, and perhaps against the English on account of the last war, but not against the Russians.'

'But why did you attack, and why do you destroy everything?'

The question was unavoidable.

'I think it is a great disaster for Germany and for Russia to be fighting against one another. The only ones to get any advantage out of it are the Americans and the English. Without doing any fighting, they have manoeuvred Germany into this adventure.'

I said this hopefully, in order to slide out of the situation. After all I did not want to tell them to their faces that we had come to overrun their land and to colonize it. Nor would they like to hear of the Crusade against Bolshevism.

To my surprise the effect of my words was astounding. I had no idea that I had struck a note which for years had been the official line of Soviet propaganda.

The opinion these Russians had of the English seemed especially low, mainly on account of the delay in opening the Second Front. They began to interpret my words to each other and nodded in agreement. They rolled cigarettes for me in strips of newspaper, licking the ends and then lighting them for me. For a moment, I

forgot my position and felt like an explorer who has discovered an interesting native tribe, rather than a lone prisoner with a completely unknown fate.

The officer was the first to break the pleasant atmosphere. He clearly wanted to destroy the favourable impression my words had made, and not to let sympathy be aroused for the 'Fascist'. In a curiously sing-song voice, he said: 'Hitler capitalist.'

The words fell into the room like stones thrown into calm water. Everybody looked at me with expectation and hostility. The officer leaned towards me, breathing vodka into my face.

'You, you tell us what Hitler is!' and he took hold of my coat and rocked me slowly backwards and forwards.

I tried to laugh and feigned indifference.

'Oh! Hitler,' I said condescendingly, 'maybe he is a capitalist, I don't know, but I do not think so.'

At this the room broke into an uproar.

They punched me viciously and pushed me on to the bed. The officer drew his pistol—which I noticed was attached to a German rifle cleaner—and with a face distorted with rage struck out at me.

I closed my eyes. This is the end, I thought, and had no time to be frightened. But suddenly, unaccountably, the room was empty. Only the little Mongolian sentry remained at the door with his gun, which, with fixed bayonet, was twice as large as himself. The sight of him made me laugh. I shook with hysterical laughter, tears streaming down my face.

I did not come to until the sentry pointed the bayonet at my chest and told me to shut up. A feeling of utter forlornness overcame me. I tried to imagine how my colleagues at the aerodrome would be talking together about my fate. Did the major know of my forced landing, and my survival? What would he tell my parents? I shivered with fear. When my mother heard I was missing she would certainly think the Russians had tortured me to death. If only I could get a message through to her. I wondered if it was possible to send letters through a neutral country to Germany? Possibly through Papen in Ankara? Would I have to remain a prisoner for years, knowing that my mother was worried to death at home? I remembered saying in an argument with our

doctor 'If we do not take Stalingrad and Baku before this winter, we shall certainly lose the war'

But victory or defeat—when would it end? That was a question which I had not thought about at all clearly. 'If peace suddenly breaks out', we had sometimes said jokingly. For some of the more passionate fighter pilots this was not really a pleasant prospect. What would be the end of my imprisonment? How many prisoners were there already? Where were the camps? In Siberia? Will we suffer the fate of 'The Army behind barbed wire' over again, or will it be different this time? Question after question. But no answer.

31st August 1942

I was sent for to be interrogated again. It was a dirty barrack room with filth all over the floor. In the middle were seated a couple of fierce looking living caricatures of Communists as depicted in *the Volische Beobachter*. Their hats well back on their heads, their dishevelled hair falling over their foreheads, they rolled their cigarette ends from one corner of their mouth to the other. They spit sunflower seeds on to the floor, drink vodka, shook their fists, shook their pistols and whips in the air and made a terrible din. Through all this they shouted their questions at me. When I refused to name my group they punched me and beat me with a whip. 'We shall make you talk, you damned German wine!

This phrase with the exception of the word 'German' I had already heard from a Gestapo official in 1938 when I had to give in a count of my leadership of an illegal group of young people. But the Gestapo man had added '...when we no longer have to be considerate

But here, they had no need to be considerate. Prisoners were cutlows today. I was a little more careful in answering the next question and no longer directly refused information. I lied, feigned ignorance and pretended not to understand. In this way I got away comparatively unscathed.

1st September, 1942

Two guards led me out of Stalingrad and a ferry boat took us across the Volga. Beneath the trees in the valley were the Soviet supply columns, well camouflaged. A large number of officers and other ranks gathered around me and again began the questions I already knew so well; questions that were a mixture of garrulity, hate, curiosity and friendliness. Suddenly one of the officers rushed at me and gripped me by the collar. I did not understand what he said to the others. But roars of laughter were the answer. My guards appeared to protest, but they could do nothing. Amidst shrieks and bursts of laughter, I was buffeted into the wood and placed in front of a tree. A platoon armed with tommy guns was formed up in front of me. With horror I realised they intended to shoot me, and my first thought was that no one would ever have news of my death. I did not know what to fight against, most, tears, or a terrible feeling of sickness. Only the hope that they might miss kept me from fainting. I heard shouts and orders, the pressing of triggers, and then the world rushed around me.

When I eventually came round, I was still leaning against the tree. I could hear nothing, but I could see the coarse, broad faces of people, roaring with laughter. Well-intended scraps and prods finally brought me to, and then I fell to the ground. Losing control of myself, I began to cry without restraint. The Russians stood around, completely at a loss. Everyone wished to do something for me. One man brought me water to drink, another produced a piece of melon, a third offered me a cigarette—but I wanted none of these things. A feeling of complete indifference came over me. I was even unable to hate those men.

Towards the evening our lorry rolled over a pontoon bridge, which crossed the northern arm of the Volga to Srednaya Ach tuba, and across which I had flown so often when making low level attacks on the nearby airfield. We stopped in a village street, and one of my companions disappeared into a farmer's cottage. He returned accompanied by a young officer, a type I had not yet seen in Russia, a healthy young man with fine features, whose demeanour and dress could not have been better had he been to a

western military college in contrast to the majority of slovenly Russians I had so far seen. Also he spoke German without an accent. Politely and correctly, and even with a touch of friendliness, he invited me into the house. The room into which he took me was clean. It had a bowl of flowers on the table, a tidy bed, another table with papers on it, two chairs and on the wall a framed picture of Lenin.

He handed me his cigarette case. 'Please help yourself! You are Count Einsiedel, Group III fighter squadron Udet, aren't you?'

'How do you know that?' I replied, amazed. 'I have so far not mentioned my unit to anyone.'

'Oh, you are not the first of that squadron whom I have spoken to. Your losses over Stalingrad are high, I heard.'

'That is how you see it.' I replied. 'For every one we lose we shoot down sixty of yours.' This was an exaggeration. That had not happened since 1941.

The Russian shook his head. 'You don't even believe that yourself. If it were true, how is it that you have so few fighter planes over Stalingrad? In my case your figures are inevitably misleading me. You can not compare your fighter losses with our losses of all types of aircraft.'

The Russian's argument was of course right.

'Well, why have the Germans so few fighter planes at Stalingrad?' he insisted.

'Many or few, you will hardly expect me to give you information on that point,' I said.

'Oh, I don't need military information from you,' he said as he began to turn over his papers. He then began reading out to me the numbers of squadrons and sections in the Stalingrad area and their average operational strength. Just over one hundred machines at most.

The Russian laughed. 'I refused to believe those figures at first but they have been confirmed over and over again by the prisoners' statements.'

'Yes, you have no scruples in the way you interrogate prisoners, you don't stop at this!,' I said.

'So you've been beaten.' Well, it does happen, but most of your

people are so terrified of being shot in the back of the neck, as Goebbels told them they would be, that they say everything without even being asked,' he said curtly. 'But actually, the Germans are hardly the people to talk about the rights of men!'

For a moment, the officer remained silent. 'We'll talk about that later. Let's go back to the one hundred fighters. It is very little, don't you agree?'

'It's apparently enough,' I replied, pointing at the open window through which, for the past few minutes, the noise of engines, the sound of firing and the thunder of light anti-aircraft guns could be heard, a proof that yet another violent air battle was taking place over Srednaia Achtuba some forty or fifty miles behind the front. I said:

'Over our air bases such things do not happen. Recently, when some ninety of your machines approached our base, only twelve miles behind the front, not a single bomb hit the target. Instead you lost forty bombers and fighters.'

The Russian gestured me to be silent. 'Your army reports lie,' he said.

'Whose army reports do not lie?' I replied. 'But I myself took part in that particular air battle and it was not the only one of its kind.'

'Don't let us quarrel over such things, but answer me one question,' he said. 'Do you think Germany will win the war? Think about it, for we shall talk again tomorrow.'

With this, I was led away with a guard on either side.

My quarters for the night were a fallen-in goat shed without roof or door, but only broken-down clay walls around a small square of hard steppe earth.

September nights are bitterly cold on the steppes. But I was not allowed to move about to get warm. When once I tried to do so, the guards raised the butt end of their guns at me. I began to feel feverish. My skin was burning and itching—obviously the after effects of the tetanus injection I had received after my shell wound. I had spent hundreds of nights in the open air, whether it

had been a night on the northern flank of the Piz-Palü at ten degrees below zero; or fourteen days and nights in the hills in Lapland, covered in wet clothes and tormented by mosquitoes; or even as a small boy of eleven, when I had been sent at night to walk ten miles through a mountain forest with neither map nor torch, almost dying with fear at the sound of my own footsteps. Compared with this night, all those were paradise. . . . It appeared that the icy cold air of the entire world was concentrated in the infinity of black sky above me, and seemed to press down upon me. My teeth chattered, I was hungry, my body burned and all my limbs hurt. All sorts of things went through my mind. How strange it was meeting that young officer. In any other circumstances I might have wanted him for a friend. Were there many men like him among the Soviets I wondered? I felt that our next conversation would be interesting. But what should I say to him? It is, of course, the natural, the obvious duty of a soldier to believe in one's cause and its victory, or at least to appear to do so when faced with one's opponent. Most of my comrades really did believe in it. But I didn't know if I did. And if I had doubts, could I admit them? Would not the other man merely think that I was trying to keep on the right side of him? But I wanted to know what this man, who clearly belonged to the Soviet élite, had to say to all these questions, the answer to which I did not really know myself. I cursed all regulations. This situation was not one which had been foreseen. I decided to talk to him freely.

Suddenly I imagined that I saw in front of me the blunt rough faces of the Russian soldiers which reflected joy at having a defenceless being in their power, the distorted mouth behind a loaded pistol, the fists and horse whips of the interrogating commissars.

How would all this end? How long could it last? If only I could send a message. If only those damnable stars up there could at least serve one purpose. Suddenly I seemed to feel the futility of this vast globe tearing round through black nothingness, while I lay on my back trembling and shivering. I jumped up. Let the sentries shoot me. I had to move, get warm, and change my thoughts or I could not stand it any longer.

The sentries swore and shouted and threatened me with the butt end of their rifles and their bayonets. I, too, began to scream, to wave my arms about, stamp my feet, and storm like a madman. At this, they moved away and stood in the doorway suspiciously watching my nocturnal dance.

2nd September, 1942

With the rising sun came warmth, the courage to go on living and refreshing sleep. My conversation with the young lieutenant was not resumed until the afternoon.

'Well,' he began, 'what do you think about the war? Will Germany win? Can it be called a just war?'

I tried to think of a suitable reply. But before I had time, he continued:

'Surely you must have ideas about the war. A man like you does not fight at the front for years without having thought about the meaning, purpose and aims of such a battle.'

'The meaning, aim and purpose of this war is to give Germany a place among the nations which would correspond to her size, population and achievements!' I finally said.

'And is it only by means of war that this is possible?' he asked.

'It looks like it,' I said.

'Do you believe that Germany has no other choice than to make war, attack other countries, occupy and plunder all Europe—all in order to take up her rightful place in the world? You believe that making war is Germany's mission?'

'No, I most certainly do not believe that, but . . .' I began to enumerate the facts, which, to my mind, had led Germany into the war, and had brought about the Third Reich, her claims to equality disregarded at Versailles, unemployment, indebtedness, over-population and the incompetence of the Weimar system to deal with these questions.

'After I had finished, he asked.

'Have you ever considered that in America, where there was no enforced Versailles Treaty, where there is a much lower density

of population, where they have inexhaustible sources of raw materials and overseas export markets, they have nevertheless suffered periods of crisis as severe as those in Germany; production fell almost to the same extent, unemployment rose just as much. But America did not use these as an argument to produce a Hitler and to start a war.'

'No, they did not,' I replied. 'The very facts you mention gave them greater possibilities to overcome their crisis.'

'So you believe that the war was inevitable and necessary?' he insisted.

'Whether it was inevitable and necessary I cannot say. I am, after all, neither an economist nor a politician. But the facts I mentioned help to explain it,' I replied.

'Therefore, your war is a just one? You have justly invaded the Soviet territory? You have justly bombarded Stalingrad, Voronezh, Rotterdam, Belgium and London? Justly you murder the Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, Frenchmen, Yugoslavs? Or . . . ?'

'No,' I said emphatically. 'The war is one thing, the murders another.'

'You are an officer?'

'Yes.'

'A fighter pilot?'

'Yes.'

'You have been in battle?'

'I have.'

'How many enemy planes have you shot down?'

'Thirty-five.'

'To what purpose?'

I could have said: 'For Germany.' But I was incapable of letting the words cross my lips. It would have been too trite. No, not even trite. It would simply have been impossible for me to do it. But in my mind, I continued this conversation started by the Russian. For Himmler and Hey? Or perhaps for Goering, in his blue silk plus-fours or red boots made of Russian leather with their golden spurs? For the Reichstag fire? For June 30th, or the concentration camps, or for the Gestapo? Or for the deportation of Jews and for the tortures? For what? Why? I did not know the answer and

suddenly it was clear to me that I had never known it. I was twelve years of age in 1933. Already, as a boy, I had heard a great deal at home about the 'Thousand-year Reich' which had not exactly increased my respect for its 'Great Men'. The conflict between the independent Youth Movement and the Hitler Youth, and my love of criticism and opposition did their part to produce in me a reaction against the Nazi system.

War as an adventure and war as a political fact—these were, however, two very different things to me, about which I had never thought at one and the same time.

But how was I to explain all this to the man in front of me now? •

The Russian watched me silently, but I turned my eyes away to avoid his. Finally he broke the silence.

'Well, you have no answer. But do you think Hitler will win the war?'

'I fear not,' I said.

'You *fear* not, so you would like him to win it?' he asked.

'A lost war can hardly be a good thing for any country,' I said.

'Do you suppose that it would be a good thing for other countries, if Hitler won the war?' he enquired.

I shrugged my shoulders. Suddenly, the whole discussion nauseated me. What did this fellow want from me? War was war and wars there have always been, justified wars, unjustified wars, well and badly conducted ones. A German fights for Germany, a Russian for Russia, a Briton for the Empire. Never had it occurred to me to ask a captured R.A.F. officer what he was fighting for and why? But we had drunk whisky with them and run races with them. They were soldiers and we were soldiers, bitter enemies in the air, but comrades on the ground with a respect for each other which was taken for granted. Why could these Russians not do the same? The Russian continued his questions, but when he saw that I could find no answer, he had me led away in a perfectly matter-of-fact manner, without changing his expression, without triumph. And yet I knew that he despised me.

I returned to my four clay walls, depressed and ashamed, furious with myself, with the Nazis, with the war, and with the Russians

Again the night seemed cruel and never ending. I felt feverish. A painfully irritating rash had spread over my body. In the morning I managed to explain to the guard that I was sick. A medical orderly arrived with a thermometer, tablets and hair clippers, objects which I was amazed to see existed here. Then I laughed at myself. If they possessed machine tools, tommy guns and mowing machines, they obviously had thermometers and hair clippers. But when the Russian began to apply his hair clippers to the back of my neck and never stopped until he reached my forehead I jumped up to defend myself, cursing and screaming. But it was of no use. I let all my hair. In a drowsy, upset, I passed my hand over my bald head. It was just as though I had been caressed and it took hours before I covered my exposure. I remembered Gumpson and recalled how I understood why, for centuries, all convicts have had their hair removed. For by doing so, man is deprived of a part of his personality and his self-respect.

4th September 1942

Another cross examination. A tall, bald man, evidently a higher ranking officer, asked me to tell the truth.

Well, how do you like being with us? he enquired ironically.
'I preferred the other side,' I replied strongly.

I did not like the ugly, ugly look of this man. He might well have been a public prosecutor, one of those who enjoy criminal prosecution because it gives them an opportunity to bask in the reflection of their own power. At the same time he had something of a monk about him as one sees them on advertisements for Bavarian beer. His hands were folded across his stomach and his tiny, laughing eyes in his round face looked out at the world with an air of self-satisfaction and benevolence. By the way his interiors addressed him, I gathered that this was Colonel Dulpanov.

'Well, we did not exactly invite you to come and see us,' he continued sarcastically. 'As an unwanted guest, you must be satisfied with what you are given.'

In my unshaven, filthy state, my hair shorn, my stomach aching from hunger, this mockery made me all the angrier.

'In the iron works of Siberia, you will have plenty of time to think about all this,' he continued mercilessly.

I was tempted to say that I had hardly expected anything else, but I kept myself under control. Discretion seems to me the better form of valour, when one is up against this type of man. After this he began to ask me particulars about myself and my family; he wanted to know what relation I was to Bismarck. Then followed questions about my education, my military training and other such matters. All of a sudden, he asked me what I knew about Karl Marx. I remembered vaguely that somewhere in my early school years, before 1933, Karl Marx had been mentioned in history classes. But I remembered little more than that he lived in the last century, that he was a Jew and the father of Communism. The ironical smile of the fat fellow maddened me because I knew what he was thinking. There was I, taking part in a crusade against Bolshevism, and I had no idea what it was all about. The fat, bald fellow continued his cross-examination.

'Do you read a great deal? What have you read?'

I said the first books which came into my mind: Wiechert, Binding, Rilke, Hermann Hesse, Jünger, Beumelberg, Dwinger. Then I thought for a moment: Russian literature? I mentioned Taras Bulba, some short stories by Lermontov and Pushkin, but Krasnov's *From the Eagle of The Tsar to the Red Flag* I refrained from citing.

'It surprises me how little you know of world literature,' he said.

I had no time then to reflect on how unexpected it was for me to have a Bolshevik, of all people, examine me on my literary knowledge. I was furious at the persistence of the man. What did he imagine? I was twenty-one years of age, three years a soldier—what should I know of world literature? I'd have liked to know if the Russian flying officers had read any more. The few captured

pilots and the stupid officers at the head of the prisoners' columns I had met had not given that impression.

'Do you know what Bismarck thought about war with Russia?' he asked.

'Several things, but he certainly thought it would be a very dangerous undertaking for Germany,' I replied.

'Do you think he was right?'

'In his time, certainly.'

'And today?'

'Very likely also today.'

'Do you think Hitler will lose the war?'

'That depends on you.'

'How?'

'If the war in the east is not over by the end of this year, Hitler has lost it!'

'Do you think that it will be over?'

'I cannot tell what effect the possible fall of Stalingrad and Baku will have on your ability to go on fighting, but I regard it as out of the question.'

'In that case, why are you fighting?'

'What has that to do with it? The German nation is at war and believes in victory. I have known only five or ten people in Germany who do not believe in a victory for Hitler, and my comrades used to laugh at me when I doubted it.'

'Do you wish to write a letter home?'

'Of course, but how can you get it there?'

'In the form of a leaflet, if you will express your doubts about Hitler's victory in it.'

'No, I won't do it.'

'Why?'

'It hardly requires explanation.'

'So you never gave expression to your doubts while on the other side?'

'Amongst my friends, yes.'

'Then why not now?'

I did not reply. Why not now? It was against all military codes. But the now that I was missing would soon reach home, and

then what? The last surviving son missing in the Soviet Union! It was worse than to have fallen in battle.

The man opposite me interpreted my thoughts.

'Well, if you do not want to do it, no one will force you,' he said.

I asked for time to think it over.

The guards led me back to my mud hut and left me there. A leaflet? It would be high treason. A return to Germany, so long as Hitler remained in power, would be impossible after that. It was a decision which would affect my whole life. In the last war, this sort of thing was unheard of. An officer of the Kaiser would never have thought twice about such a suggestion. But how could one make the comparison? In those days the Reichstag existed, peace resolutions, strikes and anti-war demonstrations were still possible.

What would I have done ten days ago, I asked myself, if I had heard of a plot to overthrow Hitler's army? Would I have denounced the men concerned? What a question! Was I to play the martyr for those madmen, those drug fiends and drunkards, for those megalomaniacs and adventurers whose stupidity was written on their faces? I remembered my stepfather, who, to the horror of the foregathered family, had pinned a life-size oil-painting of Hitler to the wall and had then stood for a long time watching it thoughtfully. Suddenly he had burst out: 'Can't you see, all of you, how cretinous this fellow looks, what a contemptible mess?'

And yet, only five days ago, I had been fighting under his flag, with the swastika on my uniform. What would the Russians think if I turned against it all now, as a prisoner of war?

I had no further time to reflect. The guard had come to fetch me and to take me into the room where my interrogators were waiting.

'Well, what is your decision?'

I was still undecided. What should I do? I felt shame and anger at having to make such a choice. All my loyalties were torn and strained. Why was there no postal arrangement for prisoners of war? Had I not a perfect right to do or not to do whatever I thought best, now that I was entirely my own master, with no

rights or laws to bind me and with no protection from my Fatherland? Even to say or write whatever I chose, in order to give my mother a little consolation and a little hope?

The Russian had put his question again and I made my decision:

‘Yes, I shall write the message,’ I said.

I sent greetings to my parents, and to my friends; I said that so far I had been treated correctly; that I was of the opinion that Germany would lose the war and that Bismarck’s warning against a war with Russia had once again been confirmed.

As I left the room, the Russian gave me his hand: ‘Good bye,’ he said.

I did not reply.

CHAPTER II

Anti-Fascists

1st October, 1942

I TRIED to keep my balance on the rough path through the boggy wood, bent double by the weight of an extremely heavy sack. There were twelve Italian officers in front of me, all equally laden, equally tired, equally miserable and weary. Behind me walked the guard with the butt end of his gun raised, swearing furiously. 'Son of a bitch! Forward, faster!'

Red spots began to dance in front of my eyes. The blood hammered in my temples and the infected wound which I had received on August 24th was very painful. I thought I would count another hundred steps and then would throw my sack into the bog and myself with it. But then I found myself counting another hundred and yet another. Finally we reached the end of the wood and dragged ourselves up a little hill. The leader of the convoy ordered: 'Stoi!—Halt!'

With a sigh of relief the thirteen prisoners lay on the ground. They closed their eyes and breathed deeply and heavily. It was some time before the first man pulled himself up to roll a cigarette with tobacco leaves and a tiny strip of newspaper. Now again we felt the pains of hunger, violent, cruel pangs which made some of the men snatch anything green they could and eat it.

It was on September 7th that I met the Italians. I had been taken to a transit P.O.W. camp on the Volga, after a three-day march of one hundred miles. I had spent the night in the ice cellar of the camp together with two other pilots who were suspected of trying to escape. The following day, the first batch was marched away. Two hundred men in columns of four, the twelve Italian officers at the head of the columns, majors, captains, lieutenants, and, in front of them all, myself, the only German. In this way,

we marched straight on to the steppes surrounded by thirty to forty heavily armed Red Army men. They drove us forty miles in twenty-four hours. Then followed a few hours of rest at the side of the road and then a further twenty miles in twelve hours, until we reached the Astrachan-Saratov railway.

Until this morning, we had been hanging about the railway station. During the whole month of our move, we had received only a chunk of bread the size of a fist every other day, and as much sugar as would cover a sixpence. If we were lucky, we had a mug of oily water from the engine. Fifty men were squeezed into every luggage van. Most of them had already contracted dysentery, and death had begun to gather its harvest. The dense traffic of Soviet supplies had been formidable on this stretch. Our train often had to stand for hours in sidings. Without pause, trains packed with troops, arms, tanks and other war material continued to roll past the crack of the sliding doors through which the bucket was pushed for sanitary purposes.

I had begun to reproach myself for not having taken a greater interest in ground tactics when I had attended the military academy. But even without this, I was able to work out for myself that a giant army was being transported into the Stalingrad region.

Finally, this morning the officers were told to get out. Only a few seconds remained to say good bye or to make an attempt to take down an address or a name, when the carriage door was shut with a bang and our comrades were gone. The train was taking them towards the north, the direction in which we had been heading for the past three weeks. We had no idea where we were now. According to my calculations it ought to have been somewhere west of the Volga, but the others said that if this were so we would have been bound to have noticed when we crossed the Volga.

Having left the goods train, we continued for a few hours in a passenger train, but soon we were all told to get out again. The guards loaded us with heavy sacks of provisions, heavier than we could carry. Bread, sausages, sugar, fish, fat and groats, the rations which we had not received. After walking a few more miles, we reached a hill. I wondered where we were as I let my eyes wander

over the large valley which stood before us. Vast potato fields stretched between autumnal woods were all that there was to see. Here and there a white church could be seen peeping out of the coloured foliage of birches or the dark shadow of the fir trees. The smoke of the fires made by people roasting potatoes in the fields rose straight as a candle into the bright autumn day. It might have been in Silesia or southern Pomerania. But I tried not to think of this, as the nostalgia would have been too great.

The leader of the convoy came towards us: 'Vot' (There it is), he said, pointing at one of the churches:

'Camp, seven hours—then eat, wash, shave and sleep.' He accompanied every word with appropriate gestures, so that we might understand. Then he said something to the guards and we were given a meal, the like of which we had not hoped for even in our wildest dreams. But first we had to assure him that we held nothing against him, that he had treated us well and that he was a good man (a *karoshii chelovek*). He was wearing a blue hat of the N.K.V.D. brigade, which guards convoys of war prisoners. The sacks soon disappeared in the nearby village. The guards who carried them there came back with them filled with bottles of vodka. Now we knew why we had had to go hungry. Mentally I prepared the complaint I would lay before the camp commander.

Shortly after, we arrived at the camp gates. The camp, we learned from a peasant boy, was the one time Oranki monastery, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Gorki, west of the Volga. We were led in single file through a small guard room into the camp. The guards were furious because they could find nothing more on us to steal. There was not a person to be seen on the road leading to the camp. The white gabled monastery church, which seemed to shine in so friendly a way at a distance, now turned out to be a dirty broken-down building which was used as a shed.

Prisoners brought wooden bowls, wooden spoons, two pots of soup and porridge dishes. They spoke not a word to us. Their movements were automatic and weary, like robots in ragged uniforms. Uncasily they looked around. Their presence seemed to make the sunlit street appear haunted. We, the newcomers,

remained silent and uncomfortable. After the meal was over, a civilian came towards us. He had a peaked cap on his head, and on his hawk-like nose was perched a pair of spectacles which had been mended with wire. In his crooked teeth he held a grotesque-looking, discoloured and chewed pipe. The fellow was dressed in a spotty black coat with a motheaten fur collar.

'All Italians?' he asked in German.

They pointed at me: 'One German.'

'Come with me,' he said. 'Your rank?'

'Lieutenant.'

'Oh, an officer!' he said, and malicious pleasure rang in his voice. 'You don't look very elegant. Where is your uniform? Why are you so filthy?'

At this I lost my temper. 'How do you expect me to look clean when everything, including my handkerchief, has been stolen from me? When we have not been able to wash for a whole month? When I have had my hair shaved off, and when we have had hardly a thing to eat for three weeks, because the guards wished to buy vodka with our rations? They hoped to keep our mouths shut by giving us a bit of sausage last night: I formally protest against this treatment.'

'So you protest,' he sneered. 'And what is your name?'

'Count Einsiedel.'

'Oh, so you are the one who wrote the leaflet near Stalingrad. Is that right?'

'How do you know?' I asked with amazement.

'You will soon learn how. Now you may go into the baths to be deloused and after that you will ask for me. My name is Commissar Wagner,' he said.

But I did not even get to see a bath. A guard came for me and took me into one of the thick-walled buildings of the monastery. He led me into the cellar, unlocking and locking heavy iron doors, and finally pushed me into a dark cell. I found that I was not alone. A lower-ranking officer, who had been given a job in the camp kitchen, had been shut in here for ten days for exchanging a wooden bowl of porridge for tobacco. But now, he was thankful for his punishment. Here it was at least warm and he

did not need to work, and his comrades from the kitchen did not leave him in the lurch, he told me. He was more than glad to see a newcomer from the outside world.

'When will the war be over? Will we be home by Christmas? Are the Russians about to capitulate?' he bombarded me with question after question. At first, I thought the fellow must have gone mad.

'Home by Christmas?' I said. 'But how do you imagine such a thing? The war will go on for another few years and nothing is certain except that Germany will probably lose it.'

'You must be an anti-Fascist,' he said. 'Where have you come from, anyway?'

'Why anti-Fascist? I am a fighter pilot who was shot down over Stalingrad a month ago,' I replied.

'Well, if the German fighters are already over Stalingrad, surely the Russians will soon be done for,' he said.

'Not only are the German fighters over Stalingrad, but the town may well have fallen by now. When I was taken prisoner, the German tanks were outside the town gates,' I said.

'There you are. So ~~we~~ shall be home for Christmas after all,' he insisted.

'All right,' I said, 'if you insist in believing this, go on believing it, but congratulate yourself if you are home by Christmas 1944. But tell me, what do you mean by an anti Fascist? And who was that man with the peaked cap and the broken spectacles who speaks faultless German? What goes on in this camp and why did the others not speak to us when we arrived?'

'Well, my dear fellow, anti-Fascists are those who talk as you do. Those who say that Hitler will lose the war, and make propaganda in the camp with the Russians and the chap with the hawk-like nose whom you asked me about. His name is Wagner, and they call him our political instructor, commissar for the prisoners. It is he who gives out the jobs in the kitchen, and if the men say they are against old Adolf, then they are anti-Fascists to him. That is why no one talks here. There are spies everywhere. If anyone spreads news of successful German offensives, then he is a Fascist. They also publish a paper here called *The Free Word*,

but not a true word is written in it. It is all about German defeats, about another ten German divisions which, after unsuccessful attacks, have been destroyed. Quite considerable "unsuccessful attacks", I call them, if they have reached as far as the Volga! I think the Russians will be defeated long before we have died of hunger here,' he concluded.

'Why die of hunger? Is there as little to eat here as there was during transit?' I asked.

'You'll see, 400 grammes of bread, two bowls of watery soup, a quarter pint of *Kasha* and 20 grammes of sugar. And that is what you are to keep alive on.'

'What is *Kasha*?' I asked.

'It is porridge made of buckwheat or oat-chaff, which is why the anti-fascists are called *Kashists* here,' he said.

Of course it was impossible for me to imagine what 400 grammes of bread amounted to. I had never eaten bread by weight before. What I heard from him was not exactly encouraging. So I was an anti-Fascist because I believed a German defeat possible. At the same time, I was a Fascist because I had said that we were outside Stalingrad. How could one make sense of it all? I could not imagine what type of man Wagner was.

'Is Wagner a Russian?' I asked.

'No, he is a German Communist. He was in prison for murder and rescued from Moabit prison by force,' my companion informed me.

'And how do you know all this?' I asked.

'Oh, everybody talks about it.'

'But why should all Communists necessarily be murderers?' I asked.

'Why do you try to defend that murderer? You will get to know his sort soon enough. Wagner is a swine, you can tell him that from me. We shall know what to do with him when we have won the war,' he jeered.

'I hope you will have no other worries by then,' I laughed.

'But who are you really and what is your rank?' he asked.

I introduced myself.

'Well, you see, so you are an anti-Fascist after all.'

'Why?'

'It was you who wrote a leaflet, wasn't it, saying that we are losing the war and that the Russians had treated you correctly? You also said that Bismarck had always been against a war with Russia.'

'But how do you know about this?'

'It was all printed in the *Free Word*,' was his reply.

27th October, 1942

For six or seven days I was left in this cell. At night they sent for me for interminable interrogations. I was told to disclose what military secrets I knew to prove my 'not unfriendly' attitude towards the Soviet Union. Otherwise, I was told, I would stay in that cell for ever, as I had made seditious speeches in the camp. Herr Wagner had reported to the Russians my protest against the treatment during transit. During the interrogations I continued to protest both against my treatment during the move as well as against my imprisonment in the cell, though I had long ago found out that it was much more pleasant to be in this cell than in the enormous, ice-cold, bug-ridden quarantine room where the Italians had been put.

Finally, I was given a room with a bed, a stove, and 200 grammes of bread above the ration. Here I was to 'rest' and to write down 'everything' I knew. A German prisoner was discharged to guard and serve me. He was an anti-Fascist, so he assured me. He had been deprived of his rank in the Wehrmacht for drunkenness and incivility towards a superior officer and had been pushed into a battalion made up of convicts. Now he was passing himself off as a deserter to the other side. By profession he was a road engineer. One day, when he had forgotten to lock me in, I discovered, in the room next to mine, plans showing German military targets, which he was preparing for the Russians. These plans were based on information received during the interrogation of prisoners. At the same time he was batman to Wagner.

The day finally arrived when even this period of trial was over for me. As not even 'friendly' persuasion had managed to extract

military secrets from me, I was thrown out of my room and bed and pushed into the quarantine room with the Italians. With them I was moved, twenty-one days later, to the General Camp. Here, imprisoned officers, Germans, Finns, Hungarians, Rumanians, Italians—some four hundred men—were living in vast unheated halls, squashed together with hardly any space to move in. Every few days somebody died of weakness. The food was the minimum required for survival. Bestial hunger ruled our life. Every step taken into the damp, cold, Russian winter air was a serious effort for the prisoners in their thin, ragged uniforms. In many cases, their boots had been stolen and they had to make do with primitive wooden shoes. Needle and thread to mend our clothes which had been torn during potato picking or felling wood were a rarity. If our clothes had once got wet during outdoor work, they sometimes would take weeks to get dry again. To catch cold in these circumstances meant death. At night millions of bugs attacked the sleeping men who were packed so close together that they could mostly only lie on their sides. Wagner had profited by these circumstances. Only six years later I was to discover in Germany who Wagner really was: Otto Braun, well known in the early twenties through a sensational trial. At that time he had played a prominent part in the German Communist Party and in the spy organization of the Comintern. By taking advantage of the differences between the pro-German and the pro-French elements, he had managed to undertake a house search in the home of a Russian colonel where valuable material on anti-Communist activity in Russia fell into his hands. He had stolen from the desk of the security officer of Berlin, a friend of his, the necessary papers with the order to carry out the house search. But he gave himself away by leaving his attaché case in a taxi. In the case brought against him he described himself as a key figure in right-radical circles. The *Red Flag* feigned indignation. His helpers theatrically refused to sit next to him in court.

But, after having served a short term of imprisonment ordered by the court for minor offences, they all celebrated the success of this comedy. Later on, Wagner was again arrested over an espionage affair, and as the German Communist Party feared a scandal

of larger magnitude their men did, in fact, rescue him from Moabit prison by force and he was sent to the Soviet Union. The papers, of course, remained in the hands of the examining magistrate and were inaccessible to the public. In the Soviet Union, he was given various tasks to perform in the Far East, but he fell into disfavour and disappeared. During the war he was brought out of oblivion again, but it was necessary for him to rehabilitate himself in some way. In order to do this he used methods of corruption and oppression to be able to report as many 'conversions' as possible.

He invited everyone to discussion evenings, and those who came received jobs in the kitchen or some other reward. When a man had got used to these favours, Wagner would ask him if he would like to join the 'anti Fascist' group in the camp. If the man refused, he was immediately deprived of his favoured position. In this way one had, in fact, already capitulated merely by attending a single discussion evening. Near the camp there was said to be an anti Fascist school where German refugees lectured on Communism. From time to time the inhabitants of the camp were ordered to attend these lectures. I attended one of them. It was exactly as I had imagined the soldiers' assemblies of 1918 to have been. The officers' corps was presented as being one large criminal organisation. Conclusions, quite fair in themselves, were over-simplified and generalisations drawn from the moral corruption which the occupation of nearly the whole of Europe, racial hatred, and the war in general had produced. All this was used as a weapon against the officer class.

The only result of these demonstrations was that no one who did not want to be identified with the Wagnerite 'anti Fascists' ever said a single word of criticism against the "Third Reich".

6
4th November, 1942

I spent ten days in this poisoned atmosphere of self protection. One morning at four a.m. a Russian awakened me.

'Get up, we are off!' he shouted. I had no preparations to make, as I had gone to bed in my thin leather jacket. I dragged myself

to the camp gates through the ice-cold winter morning. I had no farewells to make. It was true I had met several acquaintances from school, from the military academy and even from my squadron. They had listened with enthusiasm to my account of the summer offensive which had made them dream of the fall of Stalingrad, of Baku, of early victory and release. But when I expressed my scepticism, and when I admitted that I had written the leaflet without pressure, I was barred as a defeatist. Therefore I parted from them without regret.

On the 3rd November, we arrived at Kursk station in Moscow, tired, broken and hungry, and yet full of expectation to see the capital of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, we were not able to see anything but the front of the station, where we spent several hours. The Moscow youths crowded around us in the street and even the sinister threats of the N.K.V.D. soldiers did not disperse them. The children stared at us with wide eyes as they chewed dry crusts of bread. Finally, a green van arrived to pick us up.

One of the men who had already been here once before felt sure that this meant that we would be taken to a Moscow prison, either the Lubianka or the Butirki, or possibly to a camp eleven miles south-west of Moscow, in the industrial part of Krasnogorsk. When we had been on our way for some time and his surmise was obviously wrong, we fell upon the provisions which the guards had carelessly pushed into our dark cabin. I got hold of the box meant for them and remembered the saying:

'In a case of great hardship one can eat sausage even without bread.'

When we arrived at the gates of the camp there was hell to pay. My nose was still covered with butter and the others were still stuffing food into their overfull mouths. But we only laughed at the fury of the Russians, because even a prisoner cannot be deprived of what is already in his stomach.

25th November, 1942

Camp 27 was the transit camp for the central part of the front and at the same time the interrogation centre for the Moscow

agencies. All the prisoners whom the Russians considered of any importance passed through this camp before being taken to that famous Moscow prison, Lubianka, where prisoners were interrogated by representatives of the Ministry of the Interior. Conditions in this camp were scarcely better than at Oranki, but the commandant kept corruption to a minimum. There was no terrorisation here, no rousing the men against their officers, none of the bitter political animosity which existed in the officers' camps. The fact that Moscow was so near, the occasional visit of a German Communist from Moscow, the daily translations from *Pravda*, a large-scale library and the frequent arrival of new prisoners, acted as diversions from daily worries. There were some forty officers in the camp and some hundred other ranks. There were the quarantine barracks, the living barracks, the hospital barracks and the work building—that was all. Among the officers there was a Captain Hadermann who was founder of the anti-Fascist officers' group. He was an officer in the First World War and this time was taken prisoner in July 1941 after being wounded out on patrol while in command of an artillery battery. In peacetime he had been a teacher at a secondary school in Cassel. This officers' group had come to life in the spring when it had sent a petition to the Wehrmacht asking for the overthrow of Hitler and an end to the war. But only a few top officers had subscribed to it although even his bitterest enemies knew Hadermann to be a man of absolute personal integrity, honesty and rectitude. After my arrival, I spent many hours talking to him in the dim light of the passages in our barracks.

'The illusions of most of our comrades about the outcome of the war are terrifying,' he said.

'In 1941, when I was taken prisoner, and we were taken farther east from Moscow, I was nearly beaten to death for expressing my doubts that the Russians were taking us to meet the German Army which had surrounded Moscow. Today, the situation is not much better. When the day comes and our defeat will be obvious to everyone, there will be a terrible awakening. The Nazis have known how to persuade the people that they are Germans and that if Germany is defeated they will perish. It is against this that

we must fight, even as prisoners. We must try to give our comrades a new purpose, and new hope. Today we are still laughed at and accused of being traitors. Our words, our manifestos and our leaflets have little effect as yet. But within the next year, or perhaps by 1944, the situation will be different and then we will need people here who will be able to use the sudden shock to our advantage. Why shouldn't we work with the Soviet Union like the greater part of the civilised world? No one can tell what will come from this. But the fact that we have to rely on ourselves, and everyone is agreed that our Fatherland is governed by a criminal, makes the situation so unusual that we must use unorthodox methods.'

I put forward my doubts hastily: 'And what about Wagner and his *Kashists*, his spies and deserters?' I said.

'We shall have to guard ourselves against them as much as possible. In our circumstances it is difficult. But we have no other choice. We cannot suddenly turn ourselves into Nazis and sing the Horst Wessel song because of these people. The Wagners will do their work without us, but it is up to us to mobilise the decent elements and to help them to get the upper hand,' he insisted.

'A great many people have used these words to justify their capitulation to the Nazis,' I intervened.

'Yes,' he continued, 'but today it is the only possible way, now that the lawlessness has become reality. What are we to do? We can no longer appeal to international law with a clear conscience since Hitler violated it long before hostilities with the Soviet. Prisoners of war, civilians, Jews, commissars, and the fact that he has denied our existence here as prisoners—all make for a situation which leaves us entirely responsible to our own consciences.'

I was not quite able to subscribe to his arguments. I had nothing in common with the fanatical Nazi who saw Germany's future irrevocably tied up with Hitler's, nor did I agree with the old and new Communists who, having lost all sense of proportion, knew only one standard; the wonderful Soviet Union—apart from which everything else was both wicked and bad. And yet we had to take up some position, find some common purpose which

would hold us together, and make it possible to bear our imprisonment. The ruling powers in Germany had already written us off. That alone gave us the right to help ourselves. Whether we liked it or not, Russia represented certain truths and forces and could not be ignored, especially as we were wholly in the power of the Russians. These were the facts we had to face, now that we were on our own.

Had I been killed instead of being taken prisoner that would have been a fair price to pay for my flying and fighting. I had never been afraid of that. But as it was, I was alive and life would continue even when the 'Third Reich' was nothing but an unpleasant memory. Was it not right, therefore, to form a group who would attempt to work loyally with the Soviets, who would try to enlighten those whose brains had been befogged by the Nazis and who would organise propaganda against Hitler, thereby helping the interests of the German prisoners of war in Russia? I had no scruples in subscribing to such an attempt. I saw no 'treason' in this.

If anyone had betrayed Germany it was Hitler and his friends, and we had no alternative but to judge things soberly and without illusions. I therefore decided to join Hadermann's group.

5th December, 1942

Camp Meeting. Subject: The reading of a special announcement by the Soviet Information Bureau.

The speaker was the camp commandant, Colonel Voronov, a broad-shouldered fellow, from Siberia, a man with a big heart, *shirokaya naturu* as the Russians call it, a loud voice and bear-like appearance. He made a point of listening to the complaints of his prisoners, and did what he could to prevent corruption in the camp. Full of expectation, some two hundred prisoners filed into the hall. This must have been the first time that a Russian Army communiqué was read to prisoners. The slogans for the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution still decorated the walls. 'The Red Army is the finest army in the world!' 'Death to the German invaders!'

At last Voronov entered the hall. His announcement was, in fact, sensational. Along the Don river and south of Stalingrad the Russians had gone over to the offensive and were reported to have encircled German divisions.

'We too will have reason to dance in the streets one of these days,' Stalin had said in his speech of November 6th. If this communiqué was correct, his prophecy had come true very quickly.

But I was sceptical. When Voronov asked us our opinion about the news, I remarked:

'While I was being moved from camp to camp, I had occasion to see something of your armies' advance, sir. The situation at Stalingrad showed that such a disaster was inevitable. Nevertheless, twenty-two German divisions surrounded sounds like exaggeration. Perhaps they have taken prisoner men of a number of different divisions, and now they think that all these divisions have been surrounded. The Soviet communiqués, about the strength of German units and their losses, have always been very exaggerated.'

The colonel smiled.

'You are still half a Fascist,' he said.

'What has it got to do with Fascism?' I shouted indignantly. 'I consider it simply unlikely that the German Army command would have failed to anticipate this danger. Any person of average intelligence would have seen what was coming and made arrangements accordingly. Surely the best attacking forces would not be left exposed to encirclement without their flanks being covered. This is not a political but a military question.'

'Very well,' said the colonel. 'We shall talk about this again in a few weeks' time.'

CHAPTER III

The National Committee

4th March, 1943

FOR WEEKS I had been lying in the infirmary of Camp 27. I had been brought there with terrible pains in my head and only half conscious. I lay feebly in my bunk among the other patients from Veliki Luki, all of whom were reduced to skeletons like myself, after typhoid, or malaria. The rooms were not heated. The watery soup and the mouldy bread used to freeze as hard as stone. The sick men would get into bed in twos, to keep each other warm and avoid freezing to death, although it was not unknown for someone to wake up and find himself next to a corpse.

Now and again, in my more lucid moments, I had opened my eyes to find the grey-haired woman doctor of the camp leaning over me, asking:

‘What is it, Einsiedel? I wish you wanted to get better.’

How well and with what kindness that Jewish woman, whose only son had been killed in the first year of the war, looked after us. With no medicines, no heating and no means to make a proper medical examination or diagnosis, she managed to save many a life by kindness and encouragement.

The battle of Stalingrad was still the main subject of conversation in our sick room. At the beginning of February, Colonel Voronov had read out to us the news of the capitulation of the Sixth Army near Stalingrad and had given the names of some twenty generals and several dozen colonels who were said to have been taken prisoner. Already in December seventy Rumanian staff officers had arrived in the camp and had given us news which did not make the Russian successes sound so improbable after all. Latei, Hadermann had gone to the Stalingrad front together

with several German refugees and two comrades to give propaganda support to the Soviet proposals for the Sixth Army to capitulate. But in the camp we continued to have our doubts about the scale of this battle. Three hundred thousand men, twenty-two divisions, could surely have broken through any encirclement if they had wished? If the Russian superiority had really made this impossible, was it likely that all the generals would have survived to witness the collapse of their divisions? Never before had this happened in a Prussian-German Army.

'I would have to see the generals before I could believe it,' I had said to Voronov when he had spoken to me after that meeting.

He merely laughed at me. 'Their arrival has already been announced; they are coming to this camp,' he said.

And so they did. An orderly entered our room to report that the Stalingrad generals and three hundred officers of the Sixth Army had arrived in the camp. I was still too weak to get excited over something which only four weeks ago I had considered impossible. One of my room-mates was scraping the ice off the window-pane with a knife. With the help of my comrades I had been able to sit up sufficiently to see the road leading to the camp. What I saw was a grotesque spectacle. Laughing loudly and gesticulating, the generals entered their quarters with glittering medals and monocles, with fur coats and walking-sticks, with scarlet linings to their generals' coats and with fur-lined boots of the finest leather. Every now and again amid this colourful and elegant picture, a grey spot could be seen, the stooping figure of an old inhabitant of the camp, in a ragged Russian jacket and a torn German uniform, rags tied to his feet with string instead of shoes. The expression on his face was worn and lifeless as he gazed at the ground. We learned that these generals had been brought from Stalingrad to Krasnogorsk in a special train with sleeping coaches and sheets on their beds. We, the old prisoners, had listened incredulously to the tales of how condensed milk, butter, caviare and white bread had been plentiful during their transfer to the camp. Nevertheless, several of the new arrivals were already suffering from spotted typhus.

I had caught sight of a pile of luggage among which were

several metal trunks of the type made specially for the Mercedes cars used by higher commanders. The miserable prisoners nearly broke down carrying these trunks to the rooms of the generals. I fell back into my bunk. Another attack of fever made the effort to think about what I had seen too great.

6th May, 1943

During the next fortnight, while I was slowly recovering from my illness, two things happened which pointed to a new stage in the development of the anti-Fascist group in the prison camp. In the prisoners' paper, *The Free Word*, a report about an illegal 'Peace Meeting' in West Germany had appeared. At this meeting, it was said, all classes and all groups of the opposition were represented and had decided on a joint programme of action against Hitler. Judging by its tone, this report had been written by Communist German refugees in Moscow. It set off a wave of meetings in the prison camps during which the idea of a people's front against Hitler was for the first time put forward in concrete form as a subject of discussion.

Soon after that the Russian camp commissar, Major Stern, visited me in the military hospital. He asked me to make a declaration that I would pledge myself to work honestly with the Soviet Union in the fight against Hitler. I had no scruples in giving such a written declaration, as there were no other means of fighting Hitler in the circumstances. Major Stern also advised me to do all I could to get into conversation with the Stalingrad officers. It was important, he said, to exploit the shock they had suffered in their defeat at Stalingrad, in order to win them over to political action against Hitler.

But there was no question of my doing this. I was the only officer already in the camp known to be a member of the anti-Fascist group. Therefore I was boycotted by the officers from Stalingrad. To return my greetings, or to talk to me, was considered an offence against their *esprit de corps*. Even those officers who severely criticised Hitler's way of conducting the war, and in particular his treacherous behaviour towards the

Stalingrad Army, would never even have considered discussing the possibility of an active *démarche* against Hitler. The extremely primitive approach of some of the anti-Fascist officials only served to strengthen them in their point of view. But the teachers at the anti-Fascist school, which had been moved nearer to Camp 27, considered their 'educational efforts' extremely successful when their scholars marched past General Paulus into the camp singing the *Internationale* and yelling wild abuse. Meanwhile, Moscow had obviously, long before, intended to win over Paulus and his comrades for political action against Hitler.

2nd June, 1943

All the generals and nearly all the officers had been moved from Camp 27 in the middle of May, and transferred to the famous monastery, Susdal, about 180 miles from Moscow. This had up to now been reserved for Rumanian, Italian and Hungarian prisoners. Only a small group of officers remained in Camp 27, though their number was always on the increase, for when the interrogations were finished at Lubianka prison they were sent here.

The cold winter, hunger, disease, and the danger of epidemics, together with the mental oppression which the 'attitude' of the Stalingrad officers had put on me, became a nightmare of the past. Life in the camp was again quiet and bearable. The sun had begun to shine and the roads in the camp began to dry out. On the other side of the fence there was a small lane and here the young people of Krasnogorsk enjoyed themselves just as we had done in our lanes at home. I had nearly recovered from my illness and was able once again to do ten knee-bends without everything turning black before my eyes.

Nevertheless, the anxiety about the future and about the fate of my country remained. From now on it was clear to me that final defeat was rapidly approaching. What would the end be? Stalingrad had shown the lengths to which Hitler's obstinacy would go. Was he really determined to fight to the very last German battalion, on the ruins of the last German town? On both sides

hatred, bitterness, and the desire to destroy were bound to increase with every day of the war, and cause more casualties. Was there really nobody in Germany who, now that the madness of the whole thing was apparent, could put a stop to it, who had the power to make a sensible end? There was only one group that was in a position to make such an attempt, the officer corps and the High Command. They controlled the armed forces and had an accurate view of the situation. They had the organisation and the education which made it their duty to act. Or had Stalingrad, which was an example of unconditional surrender to the orders of Hitler, no matter what the consequences, been the final act of a drama which had begun with the murder of Schleicher, the drama of the gradual capitulation of the Wehrmacht to the Party? Even here in the camp, despite their own immediate experience, only very few had felt indignation against the Dictator. Most of them considered the sacrifice of the Sixth Army entirely justified from a moral and military point of view. They even believed in Hitler's 'star of destiny', in new victories, and in new German offensives. One day, a Russian bomber had been making a trial flight from the nearby factory aerodrome and had left a trail of smoke behind as it circled around. Some of the anti-aircraft officers had assured me that this was a German scout plane marking targets for the German artillery in the Krasnogorsk industrial centre. Nobody had contradicted this utter nonsense. A major of the personnel branch of the Army had assured me, amid the applause of those who were listening, that Germany had so far only struck at Russia with one finger, but now that total mobilisation had been reached, she would do so with her whole fist. He had said I would be surprised to find myself hanging on the gallows, and very soon too.

If this sort of talk was going on inside Germany, there could be little hope of opposition on the part of the generals and officer corps.

I had found refuge from these dark thoughts in the works of Marx and Lenin, in our camp library. Already, last winter, Hadermann had prepared a kind of curriculum for my studies in order that I might gain a clearer understanding. During this course of

reading, I was mainly impressed with the consistent way in which world history, and in particular the history of the past hundred years, was here presented in the light of technical and commercial development. It is true that I lacked the all-round knowledge of history which would have enabled me to judge whether all the factual material on which these theories were based was correct. Nevertheless, I found I was suddenly put in possession of a perspective of history. I was particularly impressed by the conclusions Engels and Lenin drew from their analyses of the world they lived in, conclusions which often bordered on prophecy.

At last I had found an answer to the question which had been so much to the fore in previous conversations, discussions and arguments about the Nazis. The question was whether the war had been inevitable, whether Germany could not have found a method of overcoming the 1929-32 crisis without obtaining the military and political power she wanted by force of arms.

Nobody had been able to answer this. And the inability to give a clear reply to this question had been the fundamental cause of of the inconsequential fatalism with which we had grumbled at the Nazis while yet taking part with all our energy in their war.

Even if one left the question open as to whether the social experiment in the Soviet Union had succeeded or would succeed, one fact was clear: one reason for our failure to fight the Nazis effectively in Germany was that we Germans had lacked the Marxist concept of society. We had lacked a positive aim, which the Communists had, as well as a practical insight into internal and external power politics; we had not known how to master such problems as mass unemployment. Moral indignation alone was no basis for fighting Nazism, especially if one had no better alternative to offer.

That is why I found the Communist ideas so convincing. To be honest, I was completely powerless to contradict them. I could see no power and no ideas which had a more positive, a more realistic conception of the future. Perhaps the Church? Perhaps Democracy? But had they been able to alter or prevent the catastrophes which had swept across the world? Was there any sign that they would be able to do anything now? I saw none.

The only fact which often made me doubtful was the terrible similarity in so many things between the Soviet State and the Third Reich: their penetrating propaganda—which was more vulgar even than the nationalistic banalities of the Nazis: the fanaticism with which they too clung to their preconceived ideas; the indoctrination to which one was exposed; the general levelling down and the corruption which seemed to prevail everywhere.

It was, of course, difficult to see things in their proper perspective from a prison camp. I found myself looking for excuses for all these things. Long before I was taken prisoner, I had been upset by the bitter and arrogant attitude of the officers who had always seen only the bad sides of the Soviet Union. Now they were forcing me to the opposite extreme. One could not overlook that much of what we disapproved of here was a condition special to Russia, which the socialist system had had to face owing to the century-old stagnation of this vast sub-continent. It was bound to take time for a new élite, a new society to come out of the revolution. As it was, the war had already altered a great deal. The Soviets were beginning to recognise the cultural values of the past, and were abandoning the 'revolutionary' levelling process. The reinstitution of shoulder insignia in the Army, the references to Kutuzov, Suvorov, Peter the Great, and Ivan the Terrible were only a few signs of this change of attitude. I believed that if the Soviet Union had a breathing space after the war to enable her to catch up with the economic, technical and cultural progress in the West without having to live in constant fear of being smashed by an overpowering capitalist coalition, she would herself become more liberal both spiritually and ideologically. It was surely the aim of Communism eventually to abolish the State altogether, and with it the Secret Police, the Party, the Army and the Ministry of Propaganda.

If the Communists and Social Democrats had come into power in Germany in 1933, instead of Hitler, their problems would have been much fewer than those which faced the Communists in Russia in 1919. A great deal depended on the extent to which the social revolution could count on the support of the intelligentsia, rather than wasting its strength in struggling against it. Maybe

it was necessary first to overcome one's aversion to the primitive, brutal and uneducated masses in order to raise them to a higher level.

These thoughts tormented me. If only I had had someone to talk to, someone who was completely neutral and unbiased.

17th June, 1943

A few days before two Communist émigrés, Walter Ulbricht and Erich Weinert, had arrived at the camp. They invited some of the officers to a meeting. Among these were Lieutenant-Colonel Bredt, a former member of the Stahlhelm and an official of the Pan-German Society; a Major Schultz, who had once been to America as a journalist; an export merchant, Major Büchler; the archaeologist, Dr. Greifenhagen; a former test pilot from the Luftwaffe testing ground in Rechlin; the air staff officer, Trenkmann; a cavalry officer called Captain Dommaschk; myself and a few others. They were mostly men who had displayed sober judgment concerning the situation in Germany and who, without being declared anti-Fascist, had taken part in the political discussions and meetings organised by the teachers and pupils of the anti-Fascist school at the camp.

The Communists had put forward their plan for a National Committee, which was to invite people of all political parties, professions and rank to write in action against Hitler. With the help of the wireless, newspaper, leaflets and special envoys to the front, the Committee was to organise a resistance movement of all Hitler's opponents inside Germany. Endless discussions between those taking part had begun. Most of the officers had thought the proposals of the Communists much too far-reaching. Their idea had been more on the lines of establishing common interests for the prisoners. They envisaged the reinstitution of the salute in the camp, they planned to make lists of officers killed (other ranks were not mentioned) and they hoped to arrange for postal communication between the prisoners and their homes in Germany. These had been the main points of their programme. 'Against

Alldeutscher Verband.

Hitler and for a democratic republic!' had been their only political aim. The word 'fight' had been carefully avoided as being anarchist and an invitation to civil war. Ulbricht, who lacked all sensitiveness and any skill in negotiations, nearly broke up the discussion several times with his monotonous recital of Communist slogans. Finally Weinert, thanks to his great conciliatory powers, had succeeded in persuading the officers to draft a manifesto which was to be the basis of the programme of the National Committee and to call a prisoner-of-war meeting. At this meeting we ceremoniously agreed to the text which was to be published in the *Free Word*. But at this point most of the officers suddenly withdrew their signatures. It smelt too much of high treason, and it frightened them after all.

2nd July, 1943

In the meantime, the announcement concerning the founding of the Committee had been published. It carried the signatures of Hadermann and also of several other anti-Fascists, who, however, knew nothing about their signatures appearing nor about the 'historic initiative' which had thus been taken by them, for they were away visiting other camps for publicising the foundation of the Committee.

When I asked one of the lecturers at the anti-Fascist school what the reason for this great hurry was, he had replied that it was feared in Moscow that the Allies in the West might anticipate the Russians along these lines.

A few days before the first groups of anti-Fascists had arrived from the camps in order to organise the Committee. 'Delegations' they called them. But who was to delegate? The officers' camps were against the Committee and what the attitude was in the soldiers' camps nobody knew. Behind their ready consent to almost any political resolution and their signatures to anti-Hitlerite appeals lay deep indifference or even despair resulting from the difficult conditions in the camps.

Hadermann was back from Susdal. He visited me and asked me whether I was prepared to accept a possible nomination to the

board of the Committee. He said that he had proposed me and the Committee had no objection, but I was to think it over carefully and to decide whether I was prepared to expose myself in this way. Naturally, I did not say no. At last something was beginning to happen. Whether we would be able to achieve very much through such a Committee God only knew, but at any rate it was an attempt to rally what still could be saved.

6th July, 1943

On July 5th I was moved to the anti-Fascist school where were the other future members of the Committee. There were a few lieutenants who had already completed a course at the school and who had become declared Communists, a number of delegates from the soldiers' camps—mostly officers of the working-class parties—and a few majors and captains from the officers' camps. These included Heinrich Homann, artillery officer, son of the head of Reich's Shipping Company, two engineer majors, Karl Hertz and Herbert Stössl, Captain Hiescher, a lecturer on economic from Brunswick, Fritz Kuckert, a member of the Berlin Educational Council, Major Krausneck, a bank official and one-time member of the Stahlhelm, and finally an active young man, Captain Stol.

After unbelievable hardships and periods of hunger, the 2,500 officers of the Stalingrad Army finally arrived in the Oranka and Jelibuga camp. Spotted with disease for months in these camps and almost only half their numbers survived the epidemics, the transportation and hunger. The daily death-rate had only begun to decline when winter was over and when, in April and May, the rations in the camps were suddenly increased. The bread ration had gone up to 600 grammes. The officers now received up to 70 grammes of butter and 60 grammes of sugar per day and the other ranks in most cases at least 20 grammes. Condensed milk and dried eggs had been distributed to the sick. The quantity of other foods had also gone up. The rumour had been circulated that these measures had been taken as a result of a direct order from Stalin who, after the fall of Stalingrad, had asked for a

report on the conditions in prisoners' camps. Several N.K.V.D.' officials were said to have been liquidated as having been responsible for the terrible death rate in the camps. Rumour had it that the entire administration of the Frolov camp had been brought before a court martial and had received frightful punishments. Out of 5,000 prisoners in the Frolov camp 4,000 had died in a few weeks. It had soon been realised that the farther the camps were from Moscow the less chance there was of survival. When conditions began to improve, the death rate among the Stalingrad prisoners of war had suddenly shot up, since the emaciated bodies could not deal with the sudden increase of food.

According to the account of the survivors, out of 90,000 officers and men who had been taken prisoner at Stalingrad, 60,000 now lay in the mass graves of Stalingrad. Even the most favourable calculations counted 15,000 survivors at most.

With the exception of some higher staff officers, the prisoners were mostly so enfeebled and already infected with every sort of disease when they had been taken prisoner that they had been unable to stand up to the hardships of the first few weeks. In addition, the entire Stalingrad area had been razed and there was no shelter. The nearest undamaged railway stations were over a hundred miles away. In view of the German refusal to accept any offer of capitulation and the order to open fire at Soviet officers carrying flags of truce, the Soviet Supreme Command had apparently felt justified in not making any arrangements for the maintenance of large numbers of prisoners.

Conditions had only begun to get a little better after the spotted typhus epidemic was on the decline, that is towards May and June. The improvement in the food had helped the men to get back some of their lost strength.

According to the reports of the officers from Oranki, the appeal for the foundation of the National Committee had been received in icy silence. Wagner had stirred up violent hostility among the prisoners of 1941-2 with his terrorisation and corruption, and their attitude had naturally had far greater influence on the Stalingrad officers than the propaganda of the 'anti-Fascists' and the Russians. In Camp 97, Jelabuga, which consisted only of

Stalingrad officers, an anti-Fascist group had just been formed. So far, only a few dozen officers out of 800 had joined the group.

Captain Dr Hadermann went personally to Camp Susdal. But although—or perhaps just because—the officers here were to a large extent staff officers and had been treated by the Russians far better than anyone else, they could hardly complain of their conditions of life, and the appeal had little success. The outbursts of anger against Hitler in the first weeks or even months were forgotten. The summer and the warm sun had raised the hopes of these officers for further offensives on the part of the German Wehrmacht. They began to circulate incredible rumours, and some of them even claimed to hear, at night, the gunfire of the approaching front.

A man who used to turn up at Susdal, and who had even less success than Hadermann, was Professor Arnold, a secret official of the Comintern, about whose origin and past nobody knew anything. He was a little hunchback with a boozy voice and a queer-shaped, crooked head. His external appearance and the fact that he was a Jew were sufficient to make him ridiculous in the eyes of the officers. His unquestionable knowledge of recent and present-day German history and his brilliant analyses of Adolf Hitler's politics and strategy did not help him. The majority of the officers were far too full of their own importance to let themselves be involved in the intellectual effort of a serious political discussion. The few remaining thinkers let themselves be led by the majority.

The presence of the generals at Susdal camp had helped to contribute to this, though they were by no means as united in their attitude as they appeared to be. The one time President of the Supreme Military Court, Colonel-General Heitz, had now become leader of a strong Hitlerite group and the young divisional commander, Lattmann, who, at the artillery school at Jüterbog, was known to have been a convinced National Socialist, was his right-hand man. During a fierce argument with some of the generals who had referred to Hitler in private conversation as being a criminal dilettante, Lattmann had said: 'Since we did not

revolt before we have no right to make accusations now that we are in misfortune.' But they had all been united in their rejection of the ideas of the Committee. Quite apart from their objection, on principle, that to break their oath to Hitler was incompatible with an officer's honour, they had subscribed to Field Marshal Paulus' point of view when he had said that it was impossible to have a clear picture of the situation from a prison camp. It was not certain, they said, whether Hitler would not after all succeed in re-establishing Germany's military strength. It was also not impossible that he would succeed in splitting the alliance which had been formed against him. But even if neither of these happened, action against Hitler should be left to the military leaders inside Germany, they argued.

Our counter-arguments that Hitler had betrayed the German people a hundred times over and that the oath taken in his name no longer held good were all useless. They also refused to listen to our argument that only a non-Nazi Germany might perhaps succeed in making capital out of the differences between the Allies, and that it was utter nonsense to hope for a renewal of German military power in view of the vast superiority of England, America and Russia. We tried in vain to show that the German military leaders outside Germany must be spurred on to action against Hitler and given psychological support by the destruction of the Hitler myth, and by telling the German people the truth about the actual military situation. It was important, we argued, that all opponents of Hitler, no matter to what parties they belonged, should, by our example, be encouraged to united action—if an attempt to overthrow Hitler was to succeed. But our arguments struck against the iron wall which the generals and other officers had built for themselves. They were frightened of accepting the responsibility.

Who were these people who suddenly found themselves at the anti-Fascist school to take part in the foundation of the Committee? I had not yet met the Communist lieutenants at the school. Charigius, a fighter pilot, and Reyher, an old sergeant-major of

the Reichswehr, who later commanded an engineer company, had helped to found the anti-Fascist officers' group. Berndt von Kügelgen, a journalist; Kehler, a post-office official; and a flight lieutenant, Willms, had all passed through Wagner's hands. A Major Homann, a witty and charming talker, belonged to the Hamburg business circle which had never been very keen on Hitler's methods of political and economic warfare. They knew that they would have to foot the bill in any case. In addition to this, Homann belonged to a regiment where opposition against Hitler was particularly strong among the officers. Captain Fleischer seemed a sceptic and a pessimist by nature and a walking text book of statistics. He had been a member of the Democratic Party and had always thought that Hitler's dilettantism would end in catastrophe.

Rücker and Krausneck I had known before. They had been commander and adjutant of a 'Landsturm' battalion and had been taken prisoners at Veliki Luki in January.

'My wife had always said that I would one day have to pay with my blood for Hitler's policy!' Rücker had told us in his strong Berlin accent, when he and Krausneck arrived in Camp 27. With boots which were far too big for him, spectacles which perched on his huge nose, his peaked cap and his winter cloak, he looked like a little gnome. The sight of him had horrified and at the same time amused us.

'They spat at me when I refused to hoist the old swastika at school,' he continued, 'and because I belonged to the "November Traitors", and was a Social Democrat too. Yes, they spat at me and turned me out.'

Their battalion had not even been sufficiently trained or equipped to defend the railway lines in France. It had been sent into action against T. 34 tanks. Before they had even had time to realise what was happening and had recovered from the first shock, these two World War I veterans found their battalion overrun and the Russians in the middle of their units. It had therefore been an easy matter to win them over to the anti-Fascist group in Camp 27.

By far the most intelligent men in the ranks were the two

Communist deserters, Hans Zippel and Max Ennemendörfer, and a young don, Dr Kertzscher. The teachers at the anti-Fascist school had chosen them for our Committee.

The date for the foundation of the Committee was set for July 12th. In spite of this, no one was quite clear what the political character of the Committee was to be. The Communists had brought a draft proposal with them from Moscow but it was more suitable for delivery before a Soldiers' Committee or a Communist Party meeting than for a National Committee. Those officers who were not declared Communists completely rejected the draft. After violent arguments between the non-Communist officers and the Communists, agreement over the text of the declaration of the National Committee was finally reached. As a result of these arguments, strong emphasis was placed on the desire for national self preservation in the face of Hitler's catastrophic politics and strategy. Reference was made to Stein, Clausewitz and York and a strong line taken to preserve the Army, not to return to Weimar politics and to abandon all references to the class war that were not connected with the punishment of war criminals.

Curiously enough, the Russians had shown much more sympathy and understanding for these demands than the German Communist refugees. In general, the refugees displayed an astonishing lack of comprehension of the situation in Germany. They were, for example, living under a complete illusion as to the strength of the illegal Workers' Parties in the Third Reich. I had even read a statement by Dimitroff in which he had said that the civil war in Spain had proved that the Fascist armies were not in a position to undertake large scale military action as their armies would use their weapons to fight their own oppressors and exploiters. Such preconceived ideas were the origin of the completely false conception the Russians had of the relationship between officers and men in the Germany Army. The refugees underestimated the social changes which had taken place in Germany since 1918, and particularly since 1933. They had never

understood that the Third Reich had brought with it a large portion of Socialism, that the younger officers had not received their education in selective schools, but in the Youth Movement and the Hitler Youth, and that the much-talked-of class consciousness of the workers had—to a large extent—disappeared. They had become victims of their own propaganda. Instead of analysing the facts, as their eminent predecessors had done, they projected their preconceived ideas, which they imagined to be true Marxism, into these facts.

It had actually happened at an officers' meeting in Oranki that the old parliamentarian and public speaker, Ulbricht, had been laughed to scorn when he had trotted out his eternal phrases about 'the watch dogs of capitalist monopoly'—Thyssen, Pönsgen and Zangen. He had not understood that even with the best will in the world the officers could have no idea what he had meant by this high sounding phrase, as it would have required a certain knowledge of Marxist teaching which only very few possessed. Furthermore, the refugees did not understand that the mere mention of the Weimar Republic produced a violent reaction in most Germans. Weimar was, for most of them, the symbol of a weak, aimless society, lacking in force and backbone, which had not without good reason come to an ignominious and inglorious end.

13th July, 1943

The National Committee was founded. Three to four hundred people gathered in the Krasniogorsk 'Hall of the Soviets' which had been decorated with black, white and red flags. The Communist refugees from Moscow, the future members of the National Committee chosen among the prisoners of war, students from the anti Fascist school, the 'delegations' from the camps, the Russians, Professor Arnold, Lt. Colonel Prof. Janson (the head of the anti Fascist school), Major Stern and several other officers from the Politbureau who had helped to bring the National Committee to life, were all present. There were also several 'sympathisers' from Camp 27, officers who belonged to

the original group which had backed out so ignominiously and which was now reinforced by Colonel von Hooven, the Communications Officer of the Sixth Army, Colonel Steidle, a member of Catholic Action, and Major von Frankenberg, one of the most experienced pilots in Germany.

After long speeches of good will, the text of the declaration of the National Committee was finally read out:

MANIFESTO OF THE
NATIONAL 'FREE GERMANY' COMMITTEE
TO THE WEHRMACHT AND THE GERMAN PEOPLE

Circumstances force us Germans to take immediate decisions. The National 'Free Germany' Committee has been formed in this hour of supreme danger to Germany's existence and Germany's future. Workers, writers, soldiers, officers, professional men, and politicians, men of all political and ideological views, who only a year ago would not have thought such a union possible, have today joined the National Committee. The National Committee expresses the thoughts and desires of millions of Germans at the front and at home to whom the fate of their fatherland is dear. The National Committee feels itself justified and considers it its duty to speak frankly and unsparingly in the name of the German people in this hour of destiny. Hitler is leading Germany to destruction.

At the fronts:

The defeats suffered in the past seven months are unparalleled in the history of Germany: Stalingrad, the Don, the Caucasus, Lybia, Tunis. Hitler alone is responsible for these defeats and yet he continues to stand at the head of the Wehrmacht and of the German Reich. Scattered over thousands of miles of front, the German armies stand far away from their home, relying on allies whose fighting capacity and reliability was dubious from the beginning, and exposed to the mighty blows of a coalition which is gaining in force every week. The English and American armies are knocking on the gates of Europe. Soon Germany will have to fight on all fronts at the same time. Encircled by overpowering

opponents the already weakened Wehrmacht cannot hold the enemy back much longer. The day of collapse is approaching!

At Home:

Germany has today become a scene of battle. More and more towns, industrial centres and ports are being destroyed. Our mothers, wives and children are losing their homes and belongings. The free peasants are expropriated. Total mobilisation is ruining the artisan and the trader and is sapping the nation's health and strength.

Without consulting his people, Hitler has been preparing this war for years. Hitler has isolated Germany politically. Without scruple he has provoked the greatest powers in the world and united them in a merciless war against Hitlerite domination. He has made the whole of Europe into an enemy of the German people and sullied his nation's honour. He is responsible for the hatred which surrounds Germany today.

The facts speak for themselves. The war is lost. Germany is only able to keep going at the cost of terrible sacrifices and deprivation. To continue a hopeless battle would mean the ruin of the nation.

But Germany must not die! It is a matter of survival or death for our Fatherland. If the German people continue to let themselves be led towards destruction without raising any objection, they will not only become weaker every day but they will also become more and more guilty. Then it will only be possible to overthrow Hitler with the help of foreign guns. This would mean the end of our national independence. It would mean the breaking up of our Fatherland. And we could blame nobody but ourselves.

If, on the other hand, the German people pull themselves together in time and prove by their deeds that they really want to be a free people and that they are resolved to free Germany from Hitler, then they will have gained the right to decide their own future and to demand the respect of the world. This is the only way to preserve the meaning of freedom and the honour of the German nation.

The German people want and need immediate peace. But

nobody will make peace with Hitler. Nobody will even negotiate with him. It is therefore the urgent task of our people to form a truly German government. Only such a government will enjoy the confidence of its people and that of its former enemies. Only in this way can peace be brought about.

Such a government must be strong and must have the necessary power to render harmless the enemies of the people, Hitler and his followers and protégés; to put an end to terror and corruption; to produce a stable government worthy to represent Germany abroad. This can only be achieved if all classes of society join together in a fight for freedom assisted by fighting groups who are united in their aim to overthrow Hitler. The patriotic forces in the Army must play a leading part in this battle.

Such a new government must put an end to the war immediately, must withdraw the German troops to the original frontiers of the Reich and enter into peace negotiations renouncing all conquered territory. In this way they will bring about peace and will lead Germany back into the comity of nations. The German people will only then have the chance to prove their national will in peace and to reconstitute their sovereignty. *Our aim is a free Germany.*

We demand:

A strong democratic power which is in no way similar to the apathetic Weimar régime, but which will ruthlessly suffocate any attempt at conspiracy against the nation's right to freedom or against the peace of Europe.

Complete elimination of all laws based on national and racial hatred, and all other dishonourable institutions of the Hitler régime, as well as all coercive laws passed by Hitler against freedom and human dignity.

- e The reinstitution of political rights and the furthering of social progress. The reinstitution of freedom of speech, freedom of the Press, freedom of organisation, of conscience and of religion; freedom of enterprise of trade and craftsmanship; a guarantee of the right to work and to possess legally acquired property; the handing back to their rightful owners of property stolen by the National Socialist rulers; confiscation of the wealth of those

responsible for the war and of war profiteers; the re-establishment of trade with other countries to ensure a healthy national prosperity; immediate release and compensation for all victims of the Hitler régime; a fair unsparing trial of all war criminals, war leaders, men behind the scenes and their helpers who have thrown Germany into ruin, debt and shame.

Amnesty, however, to all supporters of Hitler who have proved by their deeds that they have broken away in time and have joined the movement for a free Germany.

Forward, Germans, into battle for a free Germany!

We realise that sacrifices are inevitable. But they will be all the smaller the more determined the battle against Hitler. The sacrifices in a battle for the liberation of Germany will be a thousand times smaller than the senseless sacrifices which a continuation of the war will entail.

German soldiers and officers on all fronts! You have the weapons! Keep your weapons! Under the leadership of responsible leaders who are united with you in the fight against Hitler, be brave and make your way home to peace.

Working men and women at home! You are in the majority! Use it for organised action. Form battle groups in the factory, in the village, in the workers' camps, in the high school, everywhere where you are together! Do not follow Hitler any longer! Do not allow yourselves to be exploited to help to prolong the war. Fight with every means in your power, each one in his own way, in his own place, in the life of the State, in society and in commerce!

We have a great example in our history. One hundred and thirty years ago, when German troops were still fighting on Russian territory, the very best Germans, von Stein, Arndt, Clausewitz and Yorck, called upon the conscience of the German people to fight for freedom, addressing them from Russia above the heads of their treacherous leaders. Like them, we shall do all in our power, even at the expense of our life, to continue the battle for the freedom of our people and the speedy fall of Hitler. The battle for a free Germany requires courage, action and determination. Above all have courage. Time is short. Quick action is

required. Those who continue to follow Hitler from fear, despondency or blind obedience are cowards and are helping Germany on to national catastrophe. Those who hold the demands of the nation higher than the 'Führer's' orders and will devote their lives and honour to their people will save their Fatherland from deepest shame.

- For our people and our Fatherland!
- For immediate peace!
- For the salvation of the German people!
- For a free and independent Germany!
- National 'Free Germany' Committee.

Errick Wernert, whom the Communists intended to be President of the National Committee, had been acting as chairman at the conference. He was known as the author of political ditties in cabarets, Commissar of the Thälmann brigade in Spain, radio commentator in Moscow, translator of Russian poetry from Lermontov to Mayakovski and the author of crude pacifist poems. Together with a sort of bourgeois *bonhomie* he combined a fanatical devotion to the Soviet Union. This came easily to him, as he was obviously more at home in the sphere of 'poetic' fantasy than in a world of reality.

Two days of the conference were devoted to endless speech making.

In so far as the speeches were made not by the pupils of the anti-Fascist school who reeled off phrases they had learned by heart, but by qualified speakers such as Hadermann, Weinert, Willy Bredel, Homann, Fleischer and Hetz, the conference was an impressive balancing of accounts with Hitler, his wild ideas and crimes, and the terrible disasters which he had brought upon Germany. However contradictory, muddled and doubtful the early history of this conference may have been, however two-faced and filled with the motive of personal gain the intentions of those participating, and however much the Communists may have regarded the whole thing as a clever propaganda trick—a real hatred of the régime to which Germany had fallen a prey and a sincere hope of dealing it an effective blow, permeated the confer-

ence and gave it a note of sincerity which made me forget all my scepticism and doubts.

The chief sensation of the conference had been the appearance of the first officer to have deserted on the Eastern Front, only a few days before. He gave a shattering account of the breakdown of the new German summer offensive near Kursk and of the Soviet counter offensive. Lieutenant Frankenfels had been a party member and S.A. leader, and had been an infantry officer on the eastern front since 1941. It could not have been cowardice but more likely a sudden decision under the shock of the complete destruction of his battalion which had made him decide to go over to the enemy. In his report he had analysed coolly and clearly the hopeless mistakes of the higher military command seen from the point of view of a front-line officer. He had painted a picture of the inadequacy of the German equipment and arms and the vast Russian superiority in material, especially their mass supplies in tanks and artillery, which had served as a perfect illustration of the false hopes of the generals for a military recovery. One could only wonder how it had been possible for the military experts to have had such a false picture of the situation.

I too spoke at the conference. My theme, as it seemed an appropriate one, was Bismarck's policy towards Russia. My talk was based on the following ideas:

Bismarck had always desired political co-operation between Germany and Russia, but only under the pre-supposition that Russia would never be given a chance to play the part of the extortioner towards Germany. It was this self imposed condition in Bismarck's politics towards Russia that Hitler had ignored when, in 1939, he began a war leaning heavily on the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. Even if it were true that the Soviet Union had not played an honest game with him in 1941, he alone must carry the full political responsibility for the present state of affairs.

But today, when Germany was in such a hopeless situation, there was little time to choose. A Communist Germany at the side of a Communist Russia would always hold an important place and play a significant rôle in Europe. Problems of trade markets and unemployment would no longer exist, nor the danger

of a war on two fronts. Who would make war against such an alliance? Orientation towards the West, on the other hand, would solve none of these problems and would only make Germany the target of all conflicts between the capitalist and socialist worlds. Quite apart from this, could there be any way out of the recurrent crises of the past thirty years other than the socialist transformation of society? Could this transformation take place in any other way than in the revolutionary way through the dictatorship of the proletariat? Had anything ever been achieved on these lines without resorting to force? Had the Nazis not merely usurped the place which the Socialist Party had held in 1918 and which, in Russia, the Bolsheviks had gained for themselves—the place of a revolutionary élite? It is certainly more pleasant and more civilised to live in a democratic State, than in a State like the Soviet Union which no longer recognises a man's right to live his own life in his own way—provided that the man has money and work and provided that the democratic State is capable of maintaining the conditions of normal life. But it seems that for the past thirty years this has no longer been the case. The atmosphere of *laissez-faire* may be pleasant so long as it does not leave humanity to the chaotic and destructive influences of blind economic forces, so long as it does not mean that absence of ideals and moral values which gives a free hand to exploiters such as Hitler. Was it not futile to be indignant about the lack of freedom in the Soviet Union, so long as the mass of the people were tied to their place of work, tormented by the anxiety for their daily bread, incapable of deciding their own fate owing to lack of education? A Communist revolution in Germany would have had few victims compared with the victims and destruction of this war.

I concluded with the sentence:

‘To work together with a revolutionary Socialist Russia was bound to be more positive an arrangement for Germany than was Bismarck's friendship with the “Gendarme of Europe”.’

At midday on the second day of the conference the list of speakers had been exhausted, when Weinert rose to read out the names of the candidates for the Committee. There were thirty-two names, of which one-third were Communist refugees,

one-third officers and one-third other ranks. Weinert had put the list to the vote.

'Those who are for the list should raise their hand.' It was unanimously accepted. The newly elected members of the National Committee then signed the manifesto. Finally, the Committee elected its leaders, consisting of Weinert, Major Hetz and myself.

The conference wound up with a communal meal, innumerable glasses of vodka and a performance by a group from a Moscow theatre. From this day onwards we were to broadcast to Germany on several wavelengths. We had chosen, as our theme song, the first bars of Arndt's Song of Freedom. Our newspaper *A Free Germany*, with its black, white and red border, was to replace *The Free Word* in the camps and was also to be dropped over the front in leaflet form. A representative of the National Committee was to be appointed to every Soviet division in order to organise direct propaganda with the help of leaflets, loudspeakers and men sent to the front. At the same time these men were to collect material for the Committee. Whenever possible a student of the anti-Fascist school was to go out as assistant to the representatives at the front.

To begin with, the National Committee was to hold its meetings in the hall of the anti-Fascist school, which was a large, low cellar. After a week they were to move to a trade-union hall on the Leningrad road twenty miles from Moscow. The émigrés were to remain in Moscow and were only to come out to meetings or to do current jobs on the radio and newspaper. They were to run an office of the Committee in Moscow and to deal with the Soviets on any questions of organisation which arose, such as the printing of the paper, the management of radio transmissions, and the journeys of the envoys to the front and to the camps.

CHAPTER IV

Officers and Generals

28th July, 1943

I WAS SEATED on the deck of the river steamer, *Rosa Luxemburg*, and surrendered myself completely to the feeling of liberty which these voyages on the vast Russian rivers gave me. My hair was growing again. The thin flying boots in which I was taken prisoner were now replaced by new boots. We had been given new captured German clothing, distributed loot, but received Russian Army clothes for this journey so that we would not be conspicuous when walking alone in the streets and on the stations.

We left the Volga and turned east into the Kama river. The journey was to take two days upstream to Yelabuga, the officers' camp 97. As far as Kholm we had been given sleepers and afterwards, until the departure of the ship, we had spent several days in the government building of the Tartar People's Republic. 'We' were a delegation of the National Committee consisting of Friedrich Wolf, the doctor and German playwright, famous for his plays *Zyankali* and *Professor Mamlock*, Major Homann, Captain Stolz, Lieutenant-Colonel Baratoff, a member of the political headquarters administration of the Red Army, and myself. We had two other officers with us who were to prepare the ground for the foundation of a League of German Officers. The idea for this came from Professor Arnold, i.e. from the Russians, and from the officers of the Committee. It was clear that our propaganda would only have a chance of success in the Wehrmacht if Paulus and the majority of the higher Stalingrad officers were to back it. But as well as all their other scruples, these gentlemen were unwilling to be connected with party politicians, especially Communists, or to accept a pacifist-poet-agitator as president. They were also reluctant to sign anything such as our appeal to

found illegal groups in preparation for the *coup d'état* against Hitler. But an Officers' League would give them the opportunity to express themselves in more moderate and 'officer-like' terms. They would be under the impression that they were playing an independent rôle and would gradually get used to our way of thinking. That is why we wanted to make the decision to take part in our plan easier for them.

All these ruses would hardly have been necessary if the Communists had not been so clumsy and had possessed more knowledge of the German mentality. There were a few Communists like Bredel, Wolf and Zaisser who were quite good at dealing with the officers. But spokesmen of the Party, such as Ulbricht with his soulless 'dialectical' monologues, were insufferable. Yet Ulbricht seemed to have the most influence with the Communists. One of the students at the anti-Fascist school compared him with a trade-union leader who was always arranging something behind the scenes and then presenting the workers with the *fait accompli*.

We had a pleasant impression of Moscow and Kazan in summer, as we drove through the streets. I felt, though, that to form any real judgment one would need to know what life was like inside the houses. But the people in the streets looked happy and contented. Friedrich Wolf told us an interesting story as we entered Kazan. In the winter of 1941, when the Germans were at the gates of Moscow, he had been evacuated to Kazan with the Authors' League. Panic and defeatism reigned in Moscow. There were two or three days of complete chaos and rumours went about that Stalin was dead. The German refugees were in a desperate state of mind. Kazan is far from Moscow, but they were in such terror of the Germans coming south that they were already discussing the best methods of suicide. However, the Government of the Tartar People's Republic had plans to send these 'eminent visitors from Moscow' to the northernmost frontier in order to have a free hand in Kazan if the Soviet State broke up. It was only with the greatest difficulty they had been prevented from

carrying out this order. It would have been a death sentence for the refugees. In fact, a number of German refugees had died of starvation when a similar thing happened in Tashkent.

No, the Soviet system was not as unshakable as our propaganda made it out to be. Only a few days before, an engine driver had argued with me that the men at the head of the Government must be criminals, as it would otherwise have been impossible for the Germans to break through in one push to Moscow, Leningrad and Rostov.

'We have deprived ourselves of millions and millions for the sake of the Army,' he stormed, 'but our rapacious Government must have lined their pockets with the money.' I realised, of course, that this way of looking at things was very primitive and unfair. It was true that the Soviets had disposed of a colossal quantity of war material in 1941. But the superior German technique, mental alertness, and the experience of the German soldiers and junior officers had far outweighed this in the first two years of the war. I had become so much of a Marxist that I enquired at once what the class and background of this man was. He informed me that in 1928 his father had still owned 120 hectares of land in the Ukraine. No sooner had he told me this than he began a violent tirade against the collective farms. But I could not help believing in the idea of modern industrialised agriculture on a collective basis. Goering was right when he said that the Ukraine was a land where milk and honey flowed. Where would the Soviets be today if it were not for their mechanised large-scale agriculture which they had only been able to develop with the help of enforced collectivisation? Without this they would have been completely overrun and would have starved during the war. It was true that enforced collectivisation seemed to have swallowed the revolutionary freedom of the 'twenties and created a new absolutism. Stalin's position was strengthened in this way. And yet the question remains open whether a more liberal method would have achieved its goal. It is impossible to prove this at present. Certainly, other methods would have required more time, and it was exactly time which the Soviets could not afford.

5th August, 1943

I found myself addressing a meeting of officers in the Yelabuga camp. It was a compulsory meeting organised by the Soviet camp directors. A little while before, a group of staff officers had stated that attendance at the meetings of the National Committee of one's own free will was in itself treason, and would be punished accordingly after final victory. In view of this we had asked the Russian camp authorities to make use of their power by ordering the camp inmates to attend; thus they would prevent the camp's Nazis from coercing the other officers.

Before me were gathered some eight hundred officers from the Stalingrad Army. About one third of them ostentatiously turned their backs to me. In the expression on the faces of most of the others, I read extreme reserve, if not active dislike.

I began my lecture:

'Gentlemen! Comrades!

'You will probably be surprised and even consider it treason that the National "Free Germany" Committee is organising a meeting in this camp under the black, white and red emblem. I can assure you that it was a very careful and considered choice of colours. Under this flag, the old dream of the Germans for a unified empire once came true and the deep longing of the German people to become a confederation of states under one flag was realised. Today, we fight for this same empire, the existence of which is threatened by Hitler. By his hypocritical use of imperial ideas, Hitler has enticed us Germans to follow him. But he has used the strength of the German people and their State in a blind and deluded way, and now he seems determined to endanger the very existence of our empire and to plunge it into the inevitable ruin for which he himself is heading. That is why we are fighting against Hitler. That is why we have chosen the flag under which our empire was founded as our symbol. Our decision does not lose in value, even though Communists play an important rôle on our Committee. The Communists, too, require the existence of a German State in order to put their ideas into practice. It was a moment of great personal experience for me,

when, at one meeting connected with the foundation of the Committee, I first saw the hall decorated with the colours under which, seventy years ago, my great-grandfather saw his task of forming the German Empire realised. I hold the profound conviction that the great work begun by Bismarck is not to die. We must now take up the threads spun by him and which have been so lightly cut by his successors.

“I have helped the German people into their saddle, they will know how to ride by themselves,” Bismarck once said, and it seems to me that these words have a great deal to do with our present situation. The German people have been unable to get back into the saddle alone; nor have they taken the reins into their hands; since Bismarck they have allowed themselves to be run and the reins to be held by more and more incapable people, and today we must realise that these reins are in the hands of a traitor. We must tear them from him and show that we are determined to ride by ourselves if we wish to avoid terrible misery. Here in the camp we must not shut ourselves away from what is happening. Here, as everywhere, we too are responsible for the fate of our Fatherland. Although we failed to oppose the Hitler clique in the past, and the voice of reason can no longer be heard in Germany, we must now become the loudspeaker for that voice, in spite of the fact that our newspaper and our leaflets are printed in Moscow, our radio station is in Moscow, and we are accused of treason by the voices of evil and stupidity. Why should it not be Moscow? Bismarck always regarded co-operation between Germany and Russia as the basis of his foreign policy. Developments have proved him a thousand times right. In view of her position in the heart of Europe, it has been proved over and over again that Germany cannot survive in the struggle for power unless her relations with Russia are on a basis of honest and equitable co-operation. Such mutual co-operation is bound to be of value to both sides.

‘I cannot see why the radical changes in government and in the social order of Russia, since Bismarck’s day, should mean a fundamental change in German-Russian relations.

‘You may ask yourselves why this young man is addressing you

on this subject and under these circumstances. I know too that many of you, who are convinced National Socialists, will despise me as a traitor, and others will dismiss what I have to say as rubbish because of their higher rank. Nevertheless, I think I have a right to speak to you. I have been brought up in an officer's household and am proud of the fact that my two grandfathers fought in the cavalry battle of Mars-la-Tour, in the days when the German Empire was wrought in blood and iron. Hitler's national and social promises had their effect also in the home of my parents, especially in the years of crisis before 1933. And the people in my circle watched with growing anxiety how, after 1933, the Nazis were heading for war, more and more clearly. They saw how Hitler, against the advice of the Army and of experienced diplomats, continued his increasingly adventurous policy of extortion and breaking of treaties, a policy far worse than the escapades of William II and one which was bound to set the world against Germany. The murders of June 30th, 1934, when several good friends of my parents were among the victims, produced violent indignation against Hitler. The increasingly insolent attacks of the Party and the S.S. against the Army and many deserving patriots such as, to quote only one of many examples, Baron von Fritsch, caused many to reject the system. I, myself, had my first serious encounter with the system as an enthusiastic supporter of the free youth movement which believed in a free development of the spirit and body of the individual and encouraged comradeship, and love of nature. This movement was opposed to the Hitler Youth with its uniforms, its ridiculous playing at soldiers and its misuse of the word "comradeship". My hatred of the system began when my friends and leaders in this movement were exposed to the methods of the Gestapo and sent to concentration camps, and I myself was only released because of my name and the "consideration" the Gestapo still felt it had to give in 1938. It seemed to me that the English system of government was an ideal to be aimed at and I regretted that we entered into a war against England in 1939, with an alliance with the Soviet Union, instead of the other way about. Nevertheless, for Germany this alliance seemed the only way out of a hopelessly

mismanaged situation. But, as early as the autumn of 1940, I heard from one of Himmler's adjutants that there was to be no attack on England as we intended to march against the Soviet Union the following year. The air attacks on the British Isles were to "soften" the English into making an alliance with Germany against the U.S.S.R.

'To force an alliance with bombs! To throw away the only chance of avoiding a war on two fronts! To speculate on the hope that England and the world would sit back and watch Germany take the Ukraine in order to be able later to fling herself at the others' throats! This seemed and still seems to me the height of political madness. In spite of all this, I was an enthusiastic fighter pilot and by no means a pacifist. I have only now, through my work with the National Committee, taken upon myself the consequences of my horror of the Nazi system. But I prefer to take the consequences now, late though it be, rather than never. You may look upon this as treason. I believe it to be the putting right of what was an excusable mistake. Hitler has betrayed all his promises and oaths, as well as all our standards. We owe him no loyalty. But if you insist on your officers' conception of honour, if you wish to call us traitors, I should like to remind you of the way your officers' honour has been dragged in the mud by Hitler's Wehrmacht. If you are honest with yourselves, you will admit that we have all—without exception—been under the destructive influence of National Socialist morality. Which of us was immune from the temptations which the campaigns in Europe—so successful at first—brought with them? Which of us did not participate in the loot of France, for example, when Sperrle and Goering said: "Buy all you can, even if you go bust on the other side of the frontier." Which of us really believed that it was a war to defend our Fatherland? Were we not quite clear among ourselves that it was a war to subjugate Europe—at least Europe? How different is the present-day Army with its swastika on its chest to the Army of 1914-18, even allowing for a certain false glorification of the First World War.

"What you are is more important than what you appear to be", was the slogan of the old Army. In the Hitler Army, a wild chase

after decorations, from marshals down, has replaced all respect for achievement, soldierly feeling and real comradeship. Which of you will deny that things have gone pretty far when a new commander arrives without a Knight's Cross, the soldier will swear because he assumes that reckless offensives will now take place. I was told by a commander of mine, who was one of the wildest daredevils along the Channel coast, that after this war he would like to become commander of an aerodrome and a landowner along the Black Sea, so that he could rule "those serfs" with a whip; here in prison I learned that a commander of my III J.G. 3 squadron had left his squadron in the middle of the Stalingrad disaster to take the leave granted to him on the award of a war medal. I heard that a few hours after receiving the Knight's Cross a pilot asked to be transferred home, which was granted, and that another avoided taking part in any further attacks after getting the same order. These are not isolated cases, but examples which go to prove what sort of things happen in a war of conquest as opposed to a war of legitimate self-defence.

'You will probably think that one should not say such things about our country while we are prisoners of a foreign power which is at war with Germany. But if you accuse the supporters of the "Free Germany" movement with abusing accepted standards of honour, then you must also be prepared to let yourself be reminded by them that there are very good reasons for fighting the Hitler system in order to defend the honour of our nation. You must let us ask you not to identify serving a system which is run by traitors with service to the German people. I will not pretend that I saw all these things clearly before I became a prisoner. But being a prisoner and seeing the inability of each one of us to defend with conviction the fairness of the cause for which we had so far been fighting—and not least, witnessing the drama of Stalingrad, of which you were the victims—all this has developed my views in this direction. I never gave up hope that the heads of the Army would sooner or later put an end to the activities of the brown shirts, and it was the greatest shock to me when twenty-four generals carried out Hitler's order to continue

a battle which was completely senseless from a military point of view and could result only in the Sixth Army's destruction. They let themselves be taken prisoners complete with fur coats, trunks and walking sticks, at a moment when two-thirds of their army of 300,000 men had been destroyed, and the rest were on the point of death from starvation and disease.

'I have often cursed my imprisonment and its consequences have been difficult to bear—for, like you, I have known hunger, long weeks of dangerous fever and disease, without proper medical care, and I, too, have slept on bunks in unheated barracks. In spite of this, I know today that it is my payment for the fatal inconsequence with which I rejected Hitler and yet helped him conduct his war. And I am not the only example; it applies to us all. If you, today, tell me of the victims among the Stalingrad prisoners, and demand that the Russians treat us in a manner more seemly to officers before they begin to talk of co-operation, then I should like to reply that in my opinion we cannot ask a foreign government (especially not in our present circumstances) for something we never even demanded of our own government.

'I am even, in some ways, grateful to fate for having become a prisoner of war. For a young man like myself, it may have been the best way out of the dilemma of not believing in Hitler and yet fighting for him, of flying with passion and doubting the sense of the attack. I am also thankful because it forcibly took me out of a mental state in which I could never have had any real power of judgment, and because fate has forced me into an encounter with ideas which we, in Germany, were called upon to destroy without even understanding them. I have also learned to realise that nothing can be more pernicious than lack of understanding and under-estimation of your enemy. I know that many of you regard with suspicion anyone who takes up a Marxist book and occupies himself with the ideas on which the Soviet State is based, though this is merely a justified desire to catch up with something that my generation, at least, missed. I cannot share this attitude and I admit that I can see much truth in Socialist and Communist ideas. Germany would have saved herself a great deal

if she had given these truths some consideration. I also do not mind admitting that I have found among the Communist refugees in Moscow who work with us on this Committee people whose clear-sighted political judgments have made a great impression on me. These people in no way correspond to the picture which the Nazis have painted of them. They have answered my questions, the solutions to which I had consciously and unconsciously already searched for before my imprisonment. As long as I have no convincing counter-argument, I shall not let myself be persuaded that co-operation with the Russians is out of the question, and an attempt to save Germany from Hitler's grip is, with their help, impossible.

'I hope I have succeeded in making you see why I belong to the Committee, and why I am speaking to you here. I hope that you will have felt that it is not self advancement, but sincere concern for our Fatherland and our nation which prompts me. I hope that you will not reject our desire to take up, together with the National Committee, the battle against Hitler and his henchmen, who are determined to let the whole of Germany suffer the fate of the Stalingrad Army.'

When I had finished I was greeted with isolated applause here and there. The majority of the officers remained silent. But not quite as many backs were now turned on me. Friedrich Wolf and Major Homann spoke next. At the end of the meeting our camp was like a disturbed beehive. Before the meeting the anti-Fascist group was something not to be taken seriously, but now views for and against it were heatedly being exchanged. Immediately after the meeting, over fifty officers decided to join our group and the others gave up not speaking to us. The road seemed clear for a serious and proper discussion of our plans of action.

10th August, 1943

But our friendly discussion was not to be. On the following day, the counter-attack of the fanatically Nazi officers began. The leaders of this movement were officers of the General Staff and

young front-line commanders who had had quick promotion for distinguished service at the front. 'Fight on to final victory' was their slogan and terrorisation of their comrades their method. From the start they tried to make any discussion with us quite impossible by being offensive and provocative. On the one hand, they claimed that we were all opportunists, and on the other they demanded that the Russians should treat them in a way more 'seemly to officers', if they were to work with them. At the same time, they had all signed a declaration about the treatment in the camp long before the foundation of the National Committee. In this declaration, 800 officers had stated they were being treated humanely and according to the principles of international law. The Russians had dropped this declaration in leaflet form over the German lines, in order to dispel the German soldier's fear of being taken prisoner by the Soviets. Yet these same officers who had signed this declaration of their own free will were now accusing us of treason against the 10,000 who had died during the first few weeks and months of imprisonment after Stalingrad. These men knew quite well that in similar cases the same thing had happened in Germany. They themselves told how, during the first year of the war, some 500,000 Russian prisoners died of hunger in Germany. At all events, the 90,000 survivors of Stalingrad were already dying of hunger and were infected with every thinkable disease before they were taken prisoner. In a temperature of thirty degrees centigrade below zero, the lice sat in thick grey layers on the men's collars. That is what resistance to the last shot meant: 'Hold out, or the Führer will kick us out!' But they did not blame Hitler for the number of deaths. On the contrary. One day when we had arranged an evening of poetry reading and one of the officers sang Heine's poem 'The Two Grenadiers', put to music by Schubert, the applause at the words, 'Then my own gallant Emperor shall ride o'er the plain', turned into a demonstration of loyalty for the brown shirts.

Of course there were a number of things our side did which were grist to the mill of the Nazis and strengthened the officers' attitude. The Russian and German political instructors were constantly choosing the most blatant opportunists for special

jobs in the camp, people one could tell at a mile were Nazis. Our Camp Commandant was a drunken hero of the Revolution whose only education was to have learned the history of the Party by heart, and who was at the same time thoroughly corrupt.

Yelabuga was a singularly depressing place. It had once been a famous place of pilgrimage with two large monasteries, many churches and an important unloading point on the Kama river. Today, most of the traffic comes by rail, and in winter, when the river is frozen, the town is virtually cut off from the outer world. The real nightmare in Yelabuga was the prison. Next to the broken-down churches and monastery buildings, it was the largest building in the place, a real house of death like those in Dostoyevski's novels. Before our camp was ready, several of the officers had been taken there to be deloused, but they had only seen a few Russian convicts. Recently, however, the Russians had released a German officer who had been arrested from our camp in 1941 for alleged instigations to riot and mass demonstrations. Since then he had been in solitary confinement in the prison, without any news whatsoever about the war. He had either been completely forgotten, or the authorities had been too lazy to transfer him to Oranki, where the camp had been moved in 1942. When we asked the Russians how such a thing could happen they shrugged their shoulders. For them this was nothing unusual. They have no imagination in these things.

One of the questions we were constantly being asked in the camp was, what practical advantages could be gained by joining the camp group of the National Committee? 'Surely, while we are in these camps, we can do nothing to influence matters,' the officers asked. It was true that our propaganda could only have an effect in Germany and on the Army if the entire mass of prisoners, especially the officers, were on our side. So long as we did not have real success inside the camp the Russians were not likely to give the Committee much of a free hand. So far the number of editions of our newspaper and leaflets was ridiculously small and did not compare with the number of leaflets we German pilots had dropped over the Kharkov basin in May 1942. In

addition, the students of the anti-Fascist school, who were chosen to make front-line propaganda, were on the whole mentally incapable of drafting a sensible leaflet and used only clichés and abusive language. The whole purpose of the National Committee was to have only Communists and Communist yes-men doing the propaganda. But most people fought shy of such activities. Many feared that their relatives would be seized as reprisals, a thought which had not occurred to me. But the officers here did not draw the obvious conclusions about a system which was capable of such things.

5th September, 1943

The National Committee was moved into a comparatively modern building, which had once been a rest home, with central heating, running water and pleasantly furnished rooms. It was situated in a little wood, more like a park, on the steep bank of the Klyasma, a small tributary of the River Moskva. This was the farthest place the German troops had reached in their advance on Moscow from the north west in December 1941. There were still mines lying about, and the damage caused by hand grenades could still be seen. About one hundred officers had arrived from the various prisoner-of-war camps, among them quite a number of staff officers who wanted to join our Officers' League. The most striking names among these were Colonel Steidel, Colonel von Hooven, Major Bechler, Major von Frankenberg, Colonel Czimatis, Colonel Pickel, Major Büchler, several military advocates and doctors, as well as some lieutenants of the reserve, an educational officer, Gerlach, Dr Greifenhagen, Dr Arras, Dr Wilimzig, schoolmasters and lawyers.

On the 4th September a fleet of cars arrived bringing six generals; leading them was the large upright figure of the white-haired Walter von Seydlitz, Commanding General of the First Corps. Then followed the divisional commanders, Edler von Daniels, Martin Lattmann, Dr Körfes, Hellmuth, Schlömer and von Drebber. The Russians had brought them here from the generals' camp near Ivanovo, although they had really nothing

to do with us. They did not even return our greetings and only associated with the officers with whom they were personally acquainted and on whose advice they had been selected by the Russians. Although they regarded our activities as 'treason' at present, the officers who knew them seemed to think that we would be able to win them over in time. Seydlitz used to be considered a favourite of Hitler's. The evacuation of the Demiansk pocket took place under his command, for which he received the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross. Later, when it became clear that the army before Stalingrad was encircled, he handed a memorandum drafted by his Chief of Staff to General Paulus, in which he urged an immediate breakthrough 'if necessary against Hitler's orders'. Seydlitz knew what encirclement meant and this was doubtless the reason why he took such a strong line. Now there seemed a kind of rivalry between Seydlitz and Paulus, because Seydlitz claimed to have taken the more definite stand. Paulus claimed that Seydlitz, as a result of his memorandum, had been appointed commander of the northern flank of the pocket and directly responsible to Hitler, and that he had obeyed all Hitler's orders; Seydlitz himself had admitted this, and maintained that Hitler had then tied his hands. A suggestion for a breakthrough in January on all fronts, also east across the Volga, was said to have come from the First Corps. That would have meant suicide for the entire Army.

The truth of these things will probably never be known. Seydlitz was certainly not mentioned in the 'honours' list of the Sixth Army. This meant that his *démarche* had met with disapproval. Lattmann was one of those generals who was continually boasting of being a National Socialist. At the artillery school at Jüterbog he used to rebuke his officers in public if they had not read *Mein Kampf*. Everyone considered this a presumption on his part. His lieutenants called him 'the peacock' on account of his vanity.

Schlömer was one of the most respected and popular divisional commanders in the Stalingrad Army. We knew next to nothing about Drebbler except that he had been a police officer at Oldenburg. The most controversial figure among them was

Edler von Daniels. There were wild rumours about the conditions in his divisional staff owing to his addiction to wine and women.

7th September, 1943

This morning I nearly fell out of bed as I woke to hear, in the room opposite me, Seydlitz roaring and banging his fist on the table, so that the window panes shook :

'As long as the case of Zippel and Gold continues, there can be no question of my participating,' he roared.

Zippel, a Communist, had gone over to the enemy in June 1941, and had now been made Secretary of the National Committee. Gold, also a Communist and a deserter, had, dressed in German uniform, helped the Russians blow up the commander's headquarters at Veliki Luki. For this, he was decorated with a Soviet order. This distinction was furthermore mentioned in flamboyant style in the prisoner-of-war newspaper. By so doing, the Russians presumably thought they could convince the prisoners of the international character of the Red Army. To make a pact with deserters, even though they were deserters by political conviction, was an inconceivable idea for the generals. But to everyone's great surprise (the news had spread by lunch time) the generals, von Seydlitz, Lattmann, Schlömer, Dr Korfes and Edler von Daniels, had decided to take part in the foundation of an officers' league. It will never be known what exactly decided Seydlitz and his fellow generals to swing round so suddenly. The most difficult point during the negotiations with them was the question of 'turning round' the armed forces. The generals declared that they did not wish to be a party to 'decomposition'. Under this heading they included our call to disregard orders from higher commands, the appeal in our manifesto to form illegal groups (which reminded them too much of the years 1917-18 and the Soldiers' Councils), and our demand to fight our way back into our Fatherland, under the leadership of responsible men. The latter they regarded as tantamount to civil war and anarchy. They wanted to go no further than to invite the commanding

officers of the Wehrmacht to 'insist that Hitler should resign' in order to make way for peace negotiations. They did not want a revolution, but a high level revolt. The argument which finally convinced them was that no one could disintegrate the German Army more quickly than Hitler himself was doing, and that they would have no chance of influencing events unless they took part in the overthrow of the present régime. Stalin's speech immediately before the battle of Stalingrad must also have had its effect, for he said that no one had any intention of disarming Germany or annihilating the German Army. The Communists brought this to the notice of the German generals as an invitation to work with the Red Army, to disown Hitler and throw in their lot with the East.

Whatever happened, the road was now free for the foundation of the Officers' League. Seydlitz and several other officers were to join Wilhelm Pieck in another attempt to persuade General Paulus and the remaining generals to follow suit.

11th September, 1943

Major von Frankenberg told us the results of the trip to the generals' camp. Seydlitz and his friends arrived in the camp late at night when all the generals had gone to bed. They all jumped up in their pyjamas and gathered round him full of curiosity. Seydlitz had been so excited that the only word he could bring out was 'Tamoggen'. But the spirit of York did not inspire the night attired generals. On the following day, in a calmer atmosphere, they again failed to convince Paulus and his comrades of the necessity to act. Paulus maintained his position that it was impossible to judge the situation clearly and that one should not endanger the work of a possible military opposition by premature action. They paid no attention to Pieck, who reminded them of his mandate in the last free Reichstag election. And so, on the next day, the foundation of the 'League of German Officers' took place without Paulus and his group.

12th September, 1943

We were standing in the camp hall of the building which now belonged to the National Committee. The walls were decorated with the colours of the German Empire. Hundreds of German officer prisoners of war were seated at the tables set out in long rows, covered with white tablecloths and decorated with bunches of flowers. The hall was overcrowded and it was hardly possible to push one's way through among the tables.

The first speeches began. Staff officers and generals examined the situation boldly, and critically discussed the aims of the League. Their speeches were a merciless condemnation of Hitler. Inevitably one thought of the listeners-in at the front and in German towns, whose wirelesses would be set to the lowest audible volume; we all hoped that the German people might be listening to these appeals and that they would sympathise with us. The League of German Officers was in the making! The sober analysis of the position given by the intelligence chief of the Sixth Army, Colonel von Hooven, received universal praise. He said:

'It must be a unique event in history that officers who are prisoners of war are able to come together from different camps, allowed to air their views freely, and can found their own league. It appeared at first that this experiment must be contradictory to the aims of an enemy who had slowly but surely won the superiority in this long and bloody war, and who can see final victory in sight.

'The world situation today, and especially conditions in the Soviet Union which we have only learned to know and appreciate as prisoners of war, show, however, a unity of interests of both countries on many decisive matters. A great many officers, at first quite independent of each other, have analysed the general situation for themselves and have recognised the positive factors necessary for the life of nations. They have come to the conclusion that the time for immediate action has come in order to put an end to the war. They realise also that political and economic co-operation between all nations would give strong guarantees to each one of these nations and that this can only be achieved by

an honourable peace, which will ensure the livelihood of the nations and exclude the possibility of another war .

"Total war offers no hope. To continue it would be both mad and immoral. It could only end in complete destruction, slaughter, mutiny, the division of Germany, ruin to industry and commerce, hunger, misery and slavery. Reason and humanity demand that this war should end and peace be made before it is too late. Sometimes a comparison is made with 1918. But history does not repeat itself. This time the end will be very much worse after the Wehrmacht has been defeated, because this war is not being fought only for the political and economic issues of power politics but also according to the doctrines of the Nazi Party, for it is like the religious wars of the middle ages. The hatred of all the world is directed against Germany.

"This time there is no Reichstag in Germany, there are no political parties, no organisation as there were in 1918. There are no elements of order and security which can prevent the worst from happening once the Wehrmacht is destroyed. Such an outcome will leave Germany drifting like a cork in international politics without any weight of its own. Only a early peace can alter the fate which evidently awaits Germany. Only a timely peace can alter Germany's fate and only one organisation exists which can arrange such a peace and prevent a state of subsequent chaos — the German Wehrmacht. Now we can draw a comparison with the First World War. In 1916 Germany could have concluded a cheap peace when Wilson published his fourteen points and thereby threw the weight of America into the scales. At that time Germany was still very strong, the United States had not yet entered the war and the world was inclined to make peace. We had another great opportunity in 1917. Russia had ceased to be an enemy. France was nearly at the end of her strength, England in the midst of a crisis, and the United States not yet actively in the war, whereas Germany was unbeaten on all fronts. At that time blind delusion thwarted the peace resolution of the Reichstag. And on August 27th 1918 Ludendorff had to announce that it was now impossible to win the war, and peace negotiations would have to be opened through diplomatic channels. But it was much

too late. The German Army had been defeated on all fronts and the country was in a state of revolution. As there was no strong democratic régime to deal with the situation, we deserved the terrible conditions imposed on us at Versailles, which resulted in the complete exploitation of Germany. In his memoirs, Wilson later wrote that America had not taken part in the negotiations at Versailles owing to lack of interest. Germany was no longer a power worthy of consideration.

‘Today, the situation is very similar to that prevailing in 1917. The German Wehrmacht is still a force. But as it was then so it is today the very last moment for negotiating a peace, for the walls around the German homeland are collapsing and even the foundations are beginning to crack. . . . To end the war now would bring with it a guarantee that honourable peace conditions will be imposed in Germany ensuring the stability and life of the nation. I am convinced that it is neither in the interest of the U.S.S.R. nor of England, nor of any other power to see Germany, the heart of Europe, destroyed. Her ruin would bring about a political vacuum and complete disorder in Europe for a great many years. It would also carry with it the seeds of future conflicts. We have a further guarantee in the formal declaration of Marshal Stalin delivered openly before all the world on November 6th, 1942. His declaration, which is to be the basis for the work of the League of German Officers, runs:

“The British Soviet-American coalition has as its programme: the abolition of racial exclusiveness, equality of all nations and the inviolability of their territories; the liberation of oppressed nations and the restoration of their rights of sovereignty; respect for the right of all nations to govern themselves as they wish; economic aid to all nations which have suffered damage, and support until they have reached material prosperity; the restoration of democratic freedom and the annihilation of Hitler.”

‘In spite of all the bitterness of recent years, the Russian people have not forgotten the centuries of peaceful co-operation between our two countries. The creative efforts of Germany, her language, her music, her classics, her work in all branches of learning, are still alive today in the Soviet Union and are objects of universal

respect and admiration. The continuation of the war would only foster hate among the nations and a desire for destruction. This is why immediate peace and friendship with the Soviet Union and all other nations is an essential for the survival of Germany. General von Seeckt, with his great political intelligence, always stressed this point.

'Provided a timely end is put to the war, on the basis laid down above, the post-war world will have a great deal to offer Germany. By close co-operation with all the countries of the world and mutual trade, especially with the U.S.S.R., her industries will have unlimited sales markets. At the same time Germany would be a grateful customer for the rich excess produce of Russia. Only such a peaceful order of things can bring about a solution to the question of "living space", a question which has been so misused for propaganda purposes, and which has already caused so much blood to flow unnecessarily. Friendship with the Soviet Union and all other nations would bring the lasting peace to Germany which she needs so much. Friendly relations with the Soviet Union would mean work for everyone and the means of livelihood, instead of unemployment, hunger and misery. Again, one must draw the parallel with 1918 and the years which followed. It is true that an immediate conclusion of peace will place heavy conditions on us. We have the courage to say so openly. In any event we shall have to make good what we have done wrong, and many lean years of deprivation are bound to follow. But at least we shall have the certain prospect of prosperity and of being treated with respect in the great family of nations, whereas in the opposite case, ruin and eternal subjugation will be the only result. We cannot count on the voluntary resignation of Hitler and his government, as the bosses in this system are afraid for their lives. Their consciences and their hands are unclean. They will prefer a desperate battle to the bitter end rather than face the fate which awaits them, if the German people and the people all over the whole world who have suffered loss of life and property sit in judgment on them. They have no other course. The appointment of Himmler as Minister of the Interior in Prussia and the whole Reich, assisted by the police force of the entire country,

and as chief commander of all S.S. units, shows clearly that Hitler has no intention of ever letting the executive power fall into the hands of the Wehrmacht. Both the Government and the system intend to protect themselves against the people through the police and the S.S.

'Germany has a very difficult choice: either war under Hitler to the point of complete destruction or the overthrow of the régime and the formation of a new strong National Government which must give three guarantees:

- 1 That it has the confidence of the entire German nation;
- 2 That it will rely on the people and the Wehrmacht to uphold order and represent the interests of Germany;
- 3 That it is willing and in a position to negotiate the immediate end of the war and to lay the foundations for an honourable and lasting peace.

'This is why, comrades, we German officers consider it our urgent duty towards our nation to raise our voices and demand the resignation of Hitler and his régime. The war must stop, an armistice must be signed, and the Germans must withdraw to their German frontier. A government supported by the entire nation and with sufficient power behind it must give peace back to our severely tested people, and to the world. It must prevent any partition of Germany, must reinstate freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, and the right to free expression of opinion, must guarantee all lawfully acquired property and must preserve friendship with the Soviet Union and all other nations of the world.

'Stalingrad was a warning signal for our people of the catastrophe which threatens them. The Sixth Army, the Stalingrad Army, was declared dead. Today, those who were declared dead rise again and call upon the people to come to their senses and to "save our Fatherland in its last hour". No one has more right to this than you. Long live free, independent and peaceful Germany.'

After Colonel van Hooven, it was Colonel Steidle's turn to speak. As a practising Roman Catholic he analysed the Nazi system's attacks on the Church, on the family, on the rights of men. He concluded with the challenge that especially those officers who were prisoners of war should raise their voices to save

Germany, even though at home they had been written off as dead.

Finally, Major-General Lattmann stepped on to the speakers' platform. He discussed the meaning and value of the military oath given to Hitler in view of our present situation:

'We have given our oath to the person of Adolf Hitler, there is no getting away from that,' he began, 'and we have given it before God in solemn fashion. The question is therefore very serious: Have we a right to break it? Can we justify our reasons for taking such a step before our conscience, before our God, and—less important—before the world? Let us ignore the fact that this oath was not always given of our own free will, there are examples in history where the breaking of an oath has subsequently proved to have been a great and saving act. Even in the Christian conception of life an excuse for such an action can be found in the Commandments to obey God rather than man. The ethical concept of loyalty depends in the last instance upon the relationship between leader and followers, when the loyalty of the latter has been ensured by oath. The really honest generals and officers at Stalingrad told their troops quite frankly what the position was. I should like to remind you of the order given by one of the commanding generals, long before the battles were over. The order ran as follows: "The Führer has ordered that we fight to the bitter end. That order is sacred, my men." Generals and officers such as this one demanded from themselves and from their soldiers the fulfilment of the military oath to the last, that is to say even in a situation where, as compared with the spiritual and physical terrors, death had lost its sting. How deeply people like this general must have realised the need for peace if they only refrained from action against Hitler on account of their loyalty to their military oath. If one carries such loyalty to its logical result, one comes to the conclusion: "Let Germany be annihilated, if only the military oath is not broken." This extremity provides the justification for regarding a further adherence to the oath as immoral. Since we believe that to continue the war will bring about the annihilation of the German people, we consider the oath, given to Adolf Hitler under very different conditions, now to be invalid. Because he knew that our oath bound us to him

he was able to devise plans which were to make him into the "Greatest of all Germans". For this idea, and no longer for Germany, the precious blood of our comrades is being sacrificed. Is not this bold presumption an abuse of our loyalty? He thought that he could count on our literal interpretation of the wording of the oath. But we never gave our oath to make Hitler or anyone else the "Lord of Europe"! We swear before God that we shall be as loyal as anybody if it means fighting for Germany. But he to whom we have sworn loyalty has made a lie of this oath. Today we consider ourselves under a greater obligation to our people than ever before, and under such an obligation we feel that we have a right to act. In view of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we can at present act only with words. With these words we call the generals, officers and soldiers of the German Wehrmacht to join us against a continuation of the war! Help preserve the men of the Wehrmacht for the German people! Our Fatherland needs them. Recognise the call of the hour! Create the basis for an armistice and peace! Lead the Wehrmacht back to our frontiers! Help prevent the disbanding of the Army and the annihilation of the Reich! Help save Germany, by using the Wehrmacht as a weapon for peace! . . .

Loud applause greeted his words. Solemnly, over one hundred delegates from various officers' camps put their signatures to the appeal of the Officers' League, and the Vice-President of the National Committee, Major Hetz, declared at the same time that the officers of the National Committee would also like to sign the appeal and become members of the Officers' League. To this he added his request that the Officers' League should appoint their board members and several other members as delegates to the National Committee. Seydlitz was completely carried away by his new rôle and, forgetting his resentment against the officers who had founded the National Committee, he agreed to Major Hetz's suggestion with tears in his eyes. For several minutes he shook the hand of the deserter, Zippel, and addressed him as *Herr Gefreiter*. Seydlitz and his comrades did not suspect that with their entry into the National Committee, the Officers' League had fulfilled its purpose and that its further existence had little meaning.

21st September, 1943

In a plenary session, the formal election to the National Committee of nine members of the Officers' League took place. At the last moment the generals seemed to realise after all that by joining the National Committee they had buried their hopes of the Officers' League. Maybe they consoled themselves with the knowledge that the National Committee was bound from the very start to be of greater political significance, since the Officers' League only embodied people of a certain rank. But they obviously wanted to ensure a little more influence for themselves, by making it a condition that, in addition to Seydlitz, yet another general be elected to the National Committee. They raised this point while the Committee was already in session. For this rôle they selected von Daniels. After a sign from the Russians, Weinert agreed to their suggestion in order that the whole project should not founder on this single, minor point. However, fourteen members of the Committee, including myself, were so shocked at this intrigue on the part of the generals, that we voted against this choice, emphasising the unsuitability of von Daniels' character.

CHAPTER V

The Front

15th October, 1943

A FEW DAYS after the foundation of the Officers' League the National Committee sent me, Friedrich Wolf and Lieutenant-Colonel Baratoff to the Southern Ukrainian front. We were also accompanied by five students of the anti-Fascist school. The journey to Rostov took us through Voronezh, Millerovo and Kamenskaya, all places over which, barely fourteen months ago, I had taken part in violent air battles with the Russians. It was with very mixed feelings I saw from the window of my Russian sleeper the place where my Messerschmitt squadron had been stationed near Millerovo.

From Rostov, we were taken by lorry to the headquarters of Marshal Tolbukhin, Commander of the Fourth Ukrainian Front. There I met again the same Colonel Tulpanov who had interrogated me at Stalingrad and on whose suggestion I had written my letter which was dropped over Germany in leaflet form. He was now chief of Department 7 of the Red Army political staff attached to the Fourth Ukrainian Front. His department was responsible for propaganda among enemy troops. In peacetime he had been a teacher at the Leningrad War Academy. He showed me the leaflet which had been printed on the basis of my letter. Owing to my shorn hair and swollen face due to the eczema which the tetanus injection had given me at the time, I was unrecognisable in the photograph printed on the leaflet. In addition to this, Tulpanov had felt unable to include in the leaflet my statement that I had shot down thirty-five enemy aircraft. He had therefore had the figure-erased but had prefaced my letter with a statement that I was a well-known pilot decorated with

the Knight's Cross. By so doing, without realising it, he had made certain that every German soldier would believe the letter to be a forgery.

The day after our arrival in the area of the Mius position we were received by Marshal Tolbukhin and his Chief of Staff. I fully explained the status of the National Committee to the marshal, who promised us his support in our work. Our task was to concentrate chiefly on strengthening and improving our propaganda at the front; organising illegal groups of the 'Free Germany' movement within the German units; and collecting information about the situation inside Germany and the German Army. The propaganda was relayed to the front by means of leaflets, cars with loudspeakers, and secret transmitters. Only a few leaflets explaining the fundamental ideas of the National Committee which were of significance to the entire eastern front were sent out from Moscow. All the others were drafted by the representatives of the National Committee in the Russian armies, and by their assistants, and printed by the Red Army front-line printing units. Our most immediate task, therefore, was to draw up leaflets and to prepare broadcasts. We also held courses of instruction for anti-Fascist students and new prisoners of war, who came of their own free will to be instructed. Our work often suffered from a lack of understanding on the part of the Russians and from organisational difficulties. Infinite harm to our propaganda was done by the Red Army leaflets, which were full of lies and exaggerations. Moreover, unlimited paper was at the disposal of the Red Army, whereas we had difficulty in getting permission to print the leaflets of the National Committee in even such small editions as 10,000 copies. Ten thousand leaflets dropped at night disappeared on the thinly manned German lines like needles in a haystack. It was mere illusion to expect the German soldier to differentiate between the leaflets of the Red Army, which aimed at demoralising the soldier and inviting him to desert, and those of the National Committee which tried to persuade the German soldier to organise illegal groups, and to take conscious political action against the Hitler régime.

After two years, Red Army propaganda stood very low in the

estimation of German soldiers, who were likely to view the leaflets of the National Committee with the same indifference. The only truth contained in the Red Army leaflets was the conclusion that Hitler was losing the war, and that the Nazis were leading Germany to catastrophe.

But worst of all was the unwieldiness of the Russian administration. Before an idea even became reality, it was invariably lost in a maze of incompetence, not to mention the number of departments through which it had to pass. To this was added the astonishing lack of initiative and independence of the lower-ranking Russian soldiers, who were responsible for the propaganda work in each unit from division up. Without their support we could achieve nothing, but they were afraid of taking any decisions and were constantly worrying about what their superiors would think. They also believed that sacrilege was committed if every leaflet was not peppered with Marxist maxims, hymns in praise of the invincible Red Army and the wonderful GREAT SOCIALIST OCTOBER REVOLUTION.

All these difficulties mounted up as we started work on the organisation of illegal groups within the Wehrmacht. For this we had brought five anti-Fascist students from Moscow with us. Armed with German papers and dressed in German uniforms, they were to cross the lines and establish themselves in some base town behind the front whence they were to carry out their illegal work. But to provide these five men with the necessary German uniforms, papers, pay books, leave passes, service travel vouchers, etc., and above all with German arms, took us the best part of two months. The most difficult part was to acquire the necessary background knowledge for drawing up these documents: accurate information concerning the units opposite our front was essential. The Russians underestimated the hazards connected with this kind of work because their people could rely on the support of the population behind the German lines, whereas our people would be regarded as enemies by the Russians as well as by the Germans. The Russians were really only interested in being able to report to the appropriate headquarters that so and so many anti-Fascists had been sent behind the lines for illegal work. They were indiff-

erent to the fate of these men who were prepared to sacrifice their lives in this dangerous work, inspired only by their love of Germany and their hatred of Hitler.

Because of this attitude, many of our best people, whose equipment had been arranged not by us but by the Russians, had fallen into the hands of the German Secret Field Police. Furthermore, our activities at the front were impeded by the Russians because their inevitable reply to all our suggestions for improvement was that it was the Red Army which was winning the war and that it did all things better than the German Army. Matters became even more difficult if we tried to interfere on behalf of the German prisoners, or of the anti-Fascists working at the front with the Russians.

The Russians said that they had suffered terrible hardships in this war, and drew our attention to the destruction which the retreating German troops and special commandos left behind as a result of the Wehrmacht (O.K.W.) scorched-earth policy. One was aghast when, on the way to the front, one passed through villages wilfully burned down and littered with dead bodies of civilians and the putrefying carcasses of shot cattle. Towns like Mariupol and Stalino had been systematically burned down to the last house by the German commandos, who were ordered to destroy everything before retreating. Often black, charred bodies could be seen lying among the ruins.

I once stood with several Russian officers in front of a well which was filled to the top with the dead bodies of civilians shot by the Germans. After that I never dared to criticise the Russians' lack of feeling if we met a German prisoner-of-war column and they refused to take into our car the wounded men who were obviously unable to continue marching. I was far too ashamed to speak.

20th October, 1943

Among the captured documents, I found the diary of Wolfgang Heinz of Nuremberg, a young German officer cadet. He had arrived at the front in August and had presumably since been

killed or taken prisoner of war. I could discover no more about the author of the diary, but I copied some of it out:

30.8.43 'I am right in the front line and have got to know it well, not with shouts of victory and hurrahs, but by retreating. There have been examples of fine comradeship though also direct examples of the opposite. I cannot write down my experiences. They were too terrible, and altogether too much.'

1.9.43. 'Today begins the fifth year of war. Here everyone hopes for an attack on England and if that succeeds, everything may yet be all right. If only the air attacks on Germany would stop. They worry us more than our own problems out here.'

3.9.43. 'The Mius tragedy of 1943. Persons taking part: German soldiers, tired, hungry, wet to the skin. Place: Sturzacker. Opponents standing four hundred yards away from each other. Time: daytime.

'*Act I.* Sunrise. The Germans are preparing to retreat. It has been raining, everyone is wet, dirty and tired. The atmosphere is one of depression. Suddenly the order is given: Halt! Dig in! We are staying here. Long faces.

'*Act II.* Sudden noise of engines. For once these are not Russian but German cruiser tanks. And now it begins. The second battalion rises and rushes into attack, our own artillery fires, the tanks let off their guns, the Russians retreat. How thrilling! Happiness everywhere! But then comes the barrage fire of the others. Anti-tank, anti-aircraft fire, hand grenades, tanks, hell let loose! Losses! Attack over! Entrenchment! The end!

'*Act III.* The sun, which has been shining during the attack, has gone. Laboriously the soldiers are digging trenches for themselves under enemy fire. A violent storm is nearing from the direction of the sea. A cloud-burst. Everybody wet to the skin. The Russians fire. The German soldiers lie in their trenches as in their graves. Our tanks have vanished. Our artillery is no longer firing. It is the end! It has been one of the most eventful days of my life, this first attack. One knew no fear although one's comrades kept falling beside one; one knew one word only:

Forward! ! ! One could only have lived through it once. The greatness of the moment was indescribable.'

5.9.43. 'Now I have been at the front for fourteen days and it seems like fourteen months. I have lived through so much and I am so tired, physically and spiritually. If only one could know what it is all about! One day we are told: "Hold the position to the last man", and the next morning the battalion headquarters has gone and we follow at night! I am certain the front will not be maintained here either. How I long for the end of the war! But I want to see a peaceful world where everyone can work, think and live as he likes, and nobody can take that personal freedom from one. Should everything go, I am still young and still have the courage to begin a new life. But I shall work for myself only and never again for "high ideals", for a "Führer", "my country" or anything else.

'If peace should come while we are still here in Russia, it will be difficult for us to get back to Germany, everything will be complete chaos and no one will give a thought to the people at the front.'

6.9.43. 'We come across so many different kinds of people here, from all walks of life, and it teaches one to look at things from other points of view. I cannot write freely about all this yet. The outcome of the war will uncover many things. But one thing is clear to me now: one of the reasons for the terrible defeats which our armies have suffered is the false communiqués issued from headquarters. Everything is exaggerated, embellished or improved on, with the result that a tank division which had, let us say, only twenty tanks still at its disposal is suddenly said to have two hundred tanks. I would like to know whether the men at headquarters realise what the troops are going through in the Mius retreat; that they have no blankets to cover themselves with at night in a temperature of zero; not even a tent, or spade with which to dig for cover; nor clean underclothes or a pullover or socks, since everything has been burned during the retreat!'

8.9.43. 'How hard it is to carry out some of the orders! We have had to burn down a village today. The poor people who had so carefully built it all were in despair. But you are a cultured

nation", one woman said to me, and one could only shrug one's shoulders in reply. They went down on their knees to plead with us, offered us all their money and came towards us with raised icons in their hands. But what could we do? Orders! And while the women wept, we burned the village down. *C'est la guerre!*

10.9.43. '16.00 hours. Now it has begun to rain. "Abandon hope all ye," said the Captain when we began to withdraw. What crimes have we committed to be punished like this at the age of twenty? And who is it all for? Is not this war a swindle? Has it simply material sense and no idealistic meaning? I almost believe so.'

11.9.43. 'Why does one stand all this? Is it for the Führer, the Fatherland and one's people? No, no, a thousand times no. It is only because one sees one's comrades lying beside one in the filth and one dare not forsake them. That is the only reason, nothing else! We out here want nothing but a quick end to all this mess where our comrades get killed, while the high and mighty at home go on getting fat. Above all, we want to get home!!! Why preserve one's naked bones for a régime which does not deserve it? Surely this war has proved how incapable of survival this régime is? One should put an end to this murder of young people now while it is not yet too late. But the gentlemen at the top have no conscience. They are afraid to stand up for their actions. I must stop. The Russians have begun to attack. Good bye. It will no doubt soon be the end.'

And here, by contrast, are a few letters which were also found at the front:

Berlin—Lichtenfeld—West

From Professor Dr Wilhelm W. . . .

MY DEAR WOLFGANG,

He who is of one mind with those who are dear to him can achieve much. I thank God that by standing by your comrades through life and death you have honoured the latter, and realised

this great principal of the old soldier. It is this of which I am most proud.

By the time this letter reaches you, the Russian attacks will be weakening and maybe the scale of their own losses and bloodshed will have had the necessary repercussions on the Russian masses. Think of 1917 when almost overnight, unsuspected by us or by anyone in the world, the collapse came in Russia and freed us from pressure in the east. What madness it is, too, that that devil Churchill is free to act the way he does, and fosters the hope that he will get us down as he did in 1918. One has continually to stop and think about it all and wonder whether one will ever understand the sense of it. But let us leave this subject! When things are quieter I shall write in greater detail, and maybe I will send you a copy of the lecture I am to deliver during the early part of August at 18 Army Headquarters (Colonel-General Lindemann) up in the north-east. On the 3rd or 4th of August I will be flying to Reval and from there to Army Headquarters. But I shall stop at various military camps to lecture and will get to know the towns and countryside of that region which are as yet unknown to me. Imagine the bait they have held out to me: that I shall see the great city of Peter through a telescope! At the end of August I shall be speaking to the young officers of the 'Germanic Legion', and the officers of the S.S. officer training school at Tolz. I wonder what that will be like! On September 1st, there is a 'holiday course' starting for the war weary and others who have taken part in the war—no one has any idea what will come of it.

And so it goes on without a moment's pause all through the winter. . . .

Farewell for now, my dearly beloved eldest son—we are happy and proud of you in all things. With best wishes to you from everybody here.

YOUR FATHER.

MY DEAR WOLFGANG,

You can imagine with what sense of expectation we listen to every word of the communiqué. Things are going well. That is

all that really matters. Today, for the first time, the name of your town (Orel: *Author's note*) was not mentioned, which means that you had a quiet day yesterday. How well you deserve it! But great things may be happening soon. When once our 'clever Hans' (Field Marshal von Kluge: *Author's note*) has his right hand free to attack then the real fun will begin—such as has never been seen yet. Then it will soon be all up with the Russians. But add things up for yourself. They have 5,000,000 men in reserve for this year. The second half of the winter offensive has cost them a terrible lot. In the north, at Lake Ladoga alone, they have lost an army of 1,000,000 men. If one judges by your area (and they cannot be less elsewhere) one can add another 2,000,000 to the number of men killed along the entire front since 5th July. A blow such as the one I have suggested above would dispose of yet another million. After that there will no longer be enough men of the fifty five--sixty age group to go round. According to what people say here—based on English reports of the period before the summer offensive—Russia has so far lost, including those who have died of hunger, 80,000,000 men. Today the figure must be very much higher. Further, one should add the 50,000,000 people in the area occupied by us, which leaves Stalin only 80,000,000 at his disposal, and even that figure must be smaller by now. But Stalin has to garrison his entire southern frontier, and that includes Iran and Turkestan. And even if he keeps only a few troops in Siberia, so few that one day the Japanese will be able to reach Lake Baikal without firing a shot, protecting the rest of the country still requires a larger percentage of men than we need here. This would mean that his armed forces will be so weak that at any rate he will not be able to start an offensive this winter. If at all.

The air attacks in the west are devastating Cologne and other cities and now Hamburg too has 'ceased to exist'. This is what people say who have witnessed them. There are large numbers of people killed—excitement, bitterness and panic is everywhere. All this is due to Churchill's plans. This man, whom German propaganda has ridiculed instead of taking him as seriously as possible, is the devil in human form. He is destroying Europe in order to

make himself ruler of the world. He has Roosevelt completely in his power.

An extraordinary thing happened yesterday to prove what I have said about Churchill. For some time people have been whispering that Berlin is about to be destroyed! Last night leaflets signed by Goebbels were distributed among the houses saying: 'It is urgently requested in their own interests that everyone who is not obliged professionally or for other reasons to remain in Berlin, should move to an area less liable to air attack.'³ I was horrified and shattered. Think of the effect of such an appeal! Panic was rife in the crowded National Socialist Union offices, booking offices and railway stations. But I do not believe this. At least not in their threat that 'the whole of Berlin will be reduced to a heap of rubble', as the Ministry official said to my colleague! That would entail several million tons of explosives which means several tens of thousands of aeroplanes coming over several times. How can it be possible? How could they attack Berlin in any way except as a demonstration? They would require at least 5,000 aircraft to make an impression on Berlin, equivalent to the one made on Hamburg. Even then it would mean risking two to three thousand planes. Utter madness!

14.8.43

MY DEAR WOLFGANG,

You ask why I am still here, as I had written that I was on my way to the Eighteenth Army? The reason is a simple one. Official propaganda has painted Churchill in such a different light from the one I was going to develop in my lectures that I would risk exposing my listeners to heavy criticism. Since the decree about the 'flying court to try those of officer rank' has been passed, I have no alternative but to protect everybody from doing anything stupid. We have therefore postponed our lecture tour for a fortnight 'owing to the general situation, especially in Italy'. Whether it will take place then or not remains to be seen. But I shall write out my lecture in the next few days and will send it for approval to the Censorship Office. If they agree to it, they will then take the responsibility. In that case I and my listeners are covered.

Be assured that I will stand or fall with the front. As ever, I believe in our victory and hope for it for your sake, as you have deserved it a thousand times over. Ignore those wretches who waver and run away. Be steadfast and behave like a man. You will know how to deal with the others later. I am happy and proud of every word in your letters. I can only say that I believe in what you are doing.

With best love,

YOUR FATHER

These letters show one of those fathers who force people like Wolfgang Heinz to carry 'comradeship' to the point of risking their lives. He is the typical example of the pan-German megalomaniac. For him war was still an opportunity for pleasure-journeys and excursions for the purpose of studying nature or art. 'They have promised to show us the great city of Peter through a telescope. So that is what excited him! This man who assumes airs about wanting to fight the official attitude and by so doing to make his opponents appear ridiculous tries to prove in the same breath, by quite fantastic calculation, that Churchill will never be able to bomb Berlin and by even more fantastic figures that—in August 43—the Russians were at their last gasp. While he was wondering how to make the war appear more palatable to the young officers of the Germanic Legion he had already got one eye on the authorities to make sure that he would be saying the right thing. He wanted to be certain that someone would take the responsibility from him when he presented Churchill to the German people as the devil incarnate rather than the insignificant bugbear his 'Commander in Chief' had spoken of up to then. This man was not even clear about the meaning of his own words when he wrote in one place that he hoped that the deadening effect of Goebbels' call to evacuate Berlin would soon pass over. He had not the courage to admit that he was living in a state of intoxication because this intoxication was the last hope of 'German manhood'.

Surely we needed no further proof to show that our work was necessary, and vindicated in spite of the difference of opinion

inside our organisation? Surely we had to try everything to show a way out to these young men in uniform, who only had an inherent sense of premonition that ~~something~~ was not quite right? We had to try to give them a goal towards which they could move with conviction. We had to give them more permanent values than those vague, undefined, meaningless conceptions which the professor handed out.

When it was too late, old gentlemen like him would be the first to make wise speeches about the cynicism and nihilism of the young, and turn up their noses at us people in Russia. 'One just does not do that sort of thing', they would say; and if one had become a Communist as well, then indignation would know no bounds.

28th October, 1943

The position of the German troops was catastrophic. The Russian superiority in artillery, tanks and aircraft was overwhelming. At the same time, the front was becoming wider and wider, instead of narrower, since Hitler had forbidden all tactical and strategic retreat. The Russians were outside Kiev, and here the battle for the Melitopol bulge still continued.

I had just returned from the front. For hours we drove alongside the ceaseless battery fire. The German artillery hardly replied. I only saw German aircraft on one occasion: eight Ju 88's which were bombing field positions from a height of 15,000 feet, which is, of course, quite useless.

During the hours of darkness, when we manœuvred our heavy car, fitted with a loudspeaker, as near the front line as possible, we were filled with tension. Our trumpet signal boomed across the steppes and reached the combatants of both armies sheltering in their dug-outs and foxholes: 'Attention! Attention! This is the National Committee of "Free Germany" speaking!'

Usually, a commentator gave first the military and political news and then announced either Friedrich Wolf or me. We tried in the most matter-of-fact way possible to explain the war situation to the German soldier and to wake him from his state of

resignation and lethargy. 'German officers and men! The destiny of the nation lies in your hands. You must take into account the fact that every day the war lasts Hitler is dragging Germany deeper into disaster. Do not let irresponsible adventurers put you off with empty promises. The inevitable fate of the Hitler régime cannot be altered by continuing the war. To continue the war means the destruction of our Fatherland. Comrades! You know the situation, but you wonder what the individual can do to change it. Comrades, you are individuals who total an army of millions! You cannot conquer the three greatest powers in the world. But you can be a powerful force if you organise yourselves against Germany's real enemy—Hitler. Organise the soldiers at the front! Organise all ranks and all the units in the Wehrmacht to fight Hitler. Against Hitler!

'Clear-sighted and courageous comrades from a great many divisions have already formed illegal groups under the auspices of the "Free Germany" movement and have established contact with us. Follow their example! Organise yourselves into small groups and fight for our aims:

'The removal of Hitler with the help of the Army!

'Orderly retreat to the frontiers of the Reich!

'An end to the war and an immediate armistice!

'One word is sometimes enough; a skilful criticism may open the eyes of a comrade. Work illegally until you have formed your group. When the group is formed, win over your division; that is the way to prepare for the rising against Hitler. You can rest assured that there will be enough sufficiently determined men among the generals to take the lead when they know that the troops at the front are on their side. Each individual can and must act today!

'Comrades! Forward towards peace and a free Germany!

'The reactions to these speeches were very varied. In many places, the front remained completely silent, listening. We had invited the soldiers to let off three shots in the air as a sign of agreement—and some did so. On the other hand, in certain units angry machine gun and hand grenade fire was the reply, and sometimes the artillery even took part in violent barrages which

compelled us to stop. Occasionally assault groups were sent out to attack us.

It was interesting, in such cases, to see the reaction of the Russian front commanders. Some of them gave us their full support, thus proving they had friendly feelings towards anti-Fascists. Others were annoyed because of the additional burden we were to their troops. 'Hand grenades, rockets, tanks and bombers will win the war,' they said. 'One must kill the German Fascist. That is the only form of propaganda he understands.'

Argument was useless. It had no effect even if we quoted Lenin, who had said that war for the common soldier was merely a state of continued self-defence which he himself could hardly alter. And yet this quotation hit the nail on the head here on the Eastern Front. Illegal activity inside the Wehrmacht meant far greater risks than fighting at the front. There was no incentive to give oneself up as prisoner, for the German soldiers had found prisoners murdered too often when they counter-attacked the Russians. Only recently, one of our propaganda officers at the front saw three German soldiers, who had crossed over to the other side after hearing our speaker through the microphone, shot down by a drunken Russian. I had not spoken to a single prisoner who had not witnessed definite cases of maltreatment of prisoners. The organised mass murders of the Nazis were certainly without precedent. But the brutality of the Russians and their cruel excesses at the front were equally terrible. If this war were not over before the Russians set foot on German soil, if they entered Germany in battle, then God have mercy on us!

8th November, 1943

Together with Colonel Tulpanov, Friedrich Wolf, Lieutenant, Colonel Baratov and a certain Colonel Maltopol, the organiser of a Rumanian prisoner-of-war legion, I was sitting listening to the wireless. In a moment Hitler was to address the old Party guard in the *Bürgerbrau* in Munich on the twentieth anniversary of the march to the Feldherrnhalle.

Yesterday we were invited by the Russians to the celebration

of the twenty-sixth anniversary of the October Revolution. Kiev had just been retaken, and so the Russians were overjoyed with victory. It only needed one of the Russians to tell me how superior the Soviet system of government was, and that this was clearly shown by the successes of the Red Army, to put me into a hopeless rage on these occasions.

Their incredible superiority in men and material would eventually crush us. But it was most provocative to be constantly told this. With such material superiority, the German Army could have chased the Russians beyond the Urals without giving them a chance to get their breath. But the 'tail' here was about twice as large as the number of fighting troops. Orders were given only by messengers or wireless. Not even Tolbukhin had a telephone connection with Moscow or with the other armies. When I told him that as a lieutenant in Kalatch I had been able to speak to a private number in Berlin, as often as I cared to (although it was, of course, officially forbidden), he simply would not believe me.

If the Soviet propaganda line that the morale of an army depends on the socially just and progressive order of the society it defends, then the Third Reich was a model State compared with the Soviet Union.

At Stalingrad, more Russians went over to the German side than Germans to the Russians. These Russians were most astonished to hear from the Germans the same story that had been put out by their own propaganda. They had little faith in their leaders, and had not believed that the Germans were encircled. Tulpanov told me more Red Army men continued to go over to the enemy than German soldiers to the Russians.

Friedrich Wolf considered all this 'Fascist nonsense', racial discrimination and 'nationalism'. He felt it his duty to defend the dogma about the superiority of the Soviet State and if one argued he got so angry that discussion became impossible. All Communists reacted in that way. In this they resembled the Nazis.

I was unable to see the point of all this. The Bolsheviks were surely not to blame if the Russians were less civilised, also technically and administratively less advanced, than the West. It

would be impossible to look at the Russian achievements at all objectively without recognising that fact. Could the Russian people really be mentally so slow and lacking in self-confidence that they had to be continually urged on by this sort of propaganda? It appeared to me that such an attitude only fostered inferiority complexes, stopped the recognition of weakness and inevitably led to a false appreciation of the situation. Without this barrier of propaganda the Russians were a marvellous people: earthy, real, generous, high-spirited and good natured. They also had a wonderful capacity for giving themselves up to the moment.

During the celebrations, I was sitting rather sadly at a table reserved for 'dignitaries', sunk in gloomy thoughts, when a Russian came up to me. I was a little taken aback, because it would not have been the first time that a drunk had insulted me or Germans in general. The captain who approached me was the Red Army's specialist in hate propaganda and had never made a secret of his dislike for me. To my surprise he now began to excuse his past attitude. When I had arrived at the front, he said, he had regarded me with suspicion. The Germans had murdered his family. He could understand it when his son was shot as a partisan. But he could never forgive the fact that his wife and eleven-year-old daughter had been shot as reprisals, and therefore he hated all Germans. But now he had watched me for some weeks and had heard about my work and what I had to say about Germany. This had made him revise his judgment. 'I want to apologise for all the evil thoughts I have had about you,' he continued. 'When I heard that you had passionately defended your Fatherland against unjust accusations, that despite everything you were proud of being a German -- I began to feel great respect for you.'

It was as though this conversation was a signal. All at once the Russians accepted me as one of themselves and took me into their circle. Suddenly everybody had something good to say about Germany. They asked me to come and dance, to make merry with them, and they assured me that they were convinced Germany would have a wonderful rebirth after the fall of Hitler.

The colonel slapped me on the back: 'What is the use of so

much thinking. *Nichevo!* Everything passes in time. Today is a holiday. Make merry with us, dance with us, have a drink.'

This all happened the day before Hitler was due to speak.

The Badenweiler march was heard over the wireless. Hitler entered the Bürgerbrau. We could hear his hoarse, hard voice. He spoke to icy silence. When he paused, clearly waiting the audience's applause and appreciation, one could hear only faint clapping from the front rows. He got more and more excited, shouted louder and louder, but did not succeed in carrying the crowd with him. 'What does it matter if we have to withdraw a few kilometres,' he added in a confused stutter. 'If this test were enough to break the German people I would not shed a tear for them.'

'This must be the end, I thought to myself with a flash of hope. Surely he would never have put such a possibility into words if he did not realise that his own end was near? But my hopes were at once shattered. Wild howls of exultation greeted him as he announced revenge against England, and the destruction of the island in fourteen days. Could it be that this was the mood in Germany? Were all the feelings of hate stored up for the outside world? Or was it only Party members who were present and who reacted in this way?

When he had finished, I turned the wireless off and looked at the faces of the Russians around me. This was the first time that they had heard a Hitler speech. What a wide abyss there was between this hysterical shouting and the sober speeches of their statesmen, who weighed and calculated the effect of every exaggeration they used for propaganda purposes. Tulpanov smiled.

'The war will go on for a long time,' he said.

We contradicted him. Germany was bound to see through this declaration of bankruptcy, we said. The Wehrmacht would surely act now. But Tulpanov remained sceptical.

'You can see for yourselves. Only five per cent of the generals taken prisoner at Stalingrad have denounced Hitler, and the officers at the head of the fighting divisions are always inclined to see things more optimistically than one does in a prisoners' camp.' I only hoped that he would not be proved right.

22nd November, 1943

We arrived in a village immediately behind the front line near Perekop, the approach to the Crimea. The Russian commander led us to a house where we met a lieutenant and a battalion adjutant, who had been taken prisoner only a few hours ago.

The tall, thin student from Dresden looked at us disconcertedly from behind his spectacles. In a faltering voice he told us how he had been captured.

'The battalion counted just thirty men under arms when we took up our position two days ago on the edge of this village. . . . For weeks we had received no reinforcements and no rest; we had been forced to retreat under fire continuously, suffering heavy casualties. Ten, twenty, thirty times we received the order to defend our position to the end. Each time we were promised reinforcement, air support and goodness knows what else. But that same evening, the Russians attacked our left flanks in battalion strength, and the 'T. 34's fired at us from our rear. Our commander asked the regiment for permission to retreat into the hills beyond the marshy valley. There we would have been safe on both flanks and more protected from enemy tanks. But the reply was a categorical refusal to give up even a hundred yards of ground. Still our commander insisted on his request.

"This is plain murder," he roared into the radio.

Finally, the colonel arrived late one night. He was very friendly.

"You are absolutely right," he consoled us. "But you know the Führer's order. It is only a question of a few more hours as two batteries are already moving up to give you support. From midday tomorrow, you will have four tanks at your disposal and a field regiment of the Luftwaffe will arrive in the evening. With this help you will be able to throw back the Russian penetration."

What choice had we but to agree? In the early morning, a lieutenant of the artillery regiment arrived. When he tried to contact headquarters, he was told that the battery had not started on its way, since the neighbouring regiment had simply not let it leave. As it was, it had only five rounds per gun left. And two hours later hell broke loose. Half an hour's barrage from

guns of all calibres and in the middle of the firing an attack by three battalions and twenty tanks. Our only anti-tank gun was knocked out. In ten minutes we were overrun. We were able to hold our command post for a short while, then the tanks shot it to bits. The last four men of the battalion and three officers, the commander, the artillery man and myself, were sitting in a deep dug-out. The Russians blew open the entrance and told us to come out. Then they began to throw hand grenades into it. We squashed ourselves against the walls. During a few seconds of quiet—while I was burning papers and identity cards—one of the sergeant-majors suggested that we give ourselves up. The two officers refused. The Russians began to shout:

“Two more minutes and you will all be dead.”

A private suddenly jumped towards the entrance of the pit. There was a shot. I turned round and saw the lieutenant staring wide-eyed at the collapsed and moaning figure of the private. Before I had time to move, he put the pistol to his head and shot himself. The other soldier began to climb out of the dugout. I looked at the commander. He merely nodded his head. So I too went towards the entrance. A private gave a hand to pull me up. Another shot rang out. The commander had shot himself. Finally, I found myself standing among the Russians. One of them pointed towards the dug-out:

“Any more in there?” he asked.

“Three dead,” I replied and put my hand to my head making the gesture of shooting myself.

“Dead—why dead?” he asked. “That’s no good. You will live and return to your home. German soldiers live in Russia. If Hitler dies, it is good, but not other Germans,” he said in broken German.

When the prisoner had finished his story, I asked him if he had ever heard about the National Committee in Moscow. He replied that he had seen something about an Officers’ League in one of the official communications to the officer corps, but it was surely a lot of nonsense. He seemed to consider the existence of such a Committee as impossible. We handed him the newspaper with the account of the conference for the founding of the Committee

and of the Officers' League and left him alone to read it. An hour later, we returned and I asked him what he thought of it. He shrugged his shoulders.

'The speeches do not sound improbable to me,' he said, 'but I would have to see and talk with one of these gentlemen myself so as to make sure that their names were not forged.' At this I removed my Russian fur coat, walked up towards the lieutenant in my German uniform and introduced myself. He was speechless with astonishment. While I was telling him about the Committee and the Officers' League, his eyes began to fill with tears.

'If only we had heard of this earlier,' he said.

'Would your commander have acted differently then?' I asked.

'I cannot say,' he replied. 'We were always hoping that luck would turn in our favour and that we would get through unhurt.'

'Well,' I said, 'we can talk about this later. If you agree, I shall arrange for you to be taken to the Committee's headquarters at the Russian front. We have a small circle of German prisoners there who had a similar fate to yours. You have just said that you wished you had heard about the Committee earlier; maybe you will help us to see to it that our comrades still on the other side hear of it in time. This would mean, of course, that the war is not over for you, that you will have to continue hiding in ditches, dug-outs and minefields. If, however, you are not convinced that our way is the right one, you need only say so, and we shall send you, without it being at all detrimental to you, to the officers' prisoner-of-war camp.'

After reflecting for a few moments, the lieutenant agreed to my suggestion.

prisoners? I replied to this question in the affirmative. There was no doubt that it would mean sacrifices. But what alternative was there? Surely the number of casualties would be greater still if the defence so clumsily conducted by Hitler were to continue. If the Army at Stalingrad had accepted the Russian proposal for capitulation, while the soldiers were still healthy and had some resistance left, the death rate among the prisoners would surely have been far lower than it was?

For us there was no choice except between the greater and the lesser evil. Even though Lattmann got up suddenly and announced with pathos that, if necessary, the Red Army would cut down its own rations to feed the prisoners, he knew quite well that it was the opposite of what he and all of us believed. Things were not as simple and idealistic as that.

'Put an end to a hopeless defence! Go over to the side of the National Committee!' These were the main themes of our propaganda to the front. But as long as the scale of our propaganda was not increased, our arguments concerning these slogans were somewhat academic.

In the course of these negotiations, I incurred the animosity of the Generals' Committee. In an article in our paper *Free Germany*, addressed to the young officer corps, I accused the German leaders of lack of civic courage in yielding to the Party. In a further article I declared that the generals who adhered to the scorched earth tactics, merely furthered Goebbels' thesis that the Germans had burned their bridges behind them. To regard these tactics as the solution to all military problems would merely bring down a storm of revenge upon Germany comparable to the last judgment. The generals, especially Seydlitz, accused me of offending the Wehrmacht and of doing harm to our own cause by writing this article. (Neither Seydlitz nor I could have foreseen that Goebbels, in his diary, was to pick on this very article and to find me worthy of being placed next to Seydlitz as 'one of the most evil agitators of the clique of nobles'.) The same accusations were levelled at Major Bechler who had so far been considered one of the most faithful supporters of Seydlitz. In his position as adjutant to General Eugen Müller he had had access to the figures

of atrocities carried out on Hitler's orders (the assassination of commissars, the branding of Soviet prisoners of war, shooting of women in uniform, etc.). But when he had dared to prophesy in an article that not even Germany's enemies would believe the figures of the victims of Hitler's extermination policy when they became known one day, his position of trust with Seydlitz was over. The generals seemed to believe that it was still possible to hush up the gas chambers, the extermination camps, the mass shootings and deportations. With a naïve expression on their faces, they declared that they had never heard anything about them. Lattmann told me proudly that he had always asked every person who had spoken of such things where his information came from, as he was compelled to give official notice in order to prevent those 'wicked fairy tales' from spreading. He did not even realise that he was not only admitting that he had heard of those things, but was priding himself on having threatened to denounce those who had been worried about them. •

The position of the generals inside the Committee was equally dishonest. They did not have the courage to answer for the consequences of their own actions. They always wanted to be regarded as gentlemen conspirators! Their idea was to sit in Moscow and compose documents full of national pathos. They had been brought, they alleged, here against their will and had been more or less forced to join the Committee.

It seemed to be beyond the comprehension of the generals that, in order to produce the leaflets, it was necessary to acquire knowledge of the troops on the opposite side, by methods which were indistinguishable from espionage; that it was impossible during this illegal work not to sacrifice a few innocent lives; and that in order to bring about the overthrow of Hitler, demanded by them, it might be necessary to start an actual civil war. At the same time, it was continually happening that they found themselves approving a point one day, which only the day before they had considered to be the height of unworthy, dishonourable depravity. The case of 'Zippel and Gold' and the arguments concerning the nature of the propaganda to be used at the front were simply examples of this frame of mind.

They had behaved in exactly the same way before they were taken prisoner, at the time of Schleicher's murder, of the Fritsch scandal, of the Beck affair, and during the S.S. massacres in Poland, refusing to act and simply behaving as though nothing had happened. In short, they had always feared responsibility and had always only been concerned about saving their own faces, while they ignored reality. The election of Daniels as Vice-President of the Committee was a typical case. The generals had insisted on his candidature in the form of an ultimatum and, from a kind of *esprit de corps*, thought it right to ignore the objections raised against him. They thought that Daniels would represent them on the Committee in that same spirit. But they miscalculated completely. Daniels agreed to everything the 'left wing' of the Committee proposed. He signed articles which Seydlitz and Lattmann would never have approved and which he himself had not even bothered to read. He was only interested in the privileges he received as a general and member of the Committee. These facts confirmed the rumours which circulated about him.

15th March, 1944

I again spent several weeks in the Officers' Camp at Yelabuga with Lattmann and Schlömer. The officers from the Oranki camp had also been moved there. But I cannot say that I liked this journey in the Russian winter, first in an overcrowded train for prisoners and then over a hundred miles in a sleigh through snow-covered woods with howling wolves in the distance.

The conditions in the camp had again deteriorated and were almost as bad as they had been in November 1942. The political disagreement between the supporters of our Committee—only one-third of the officers—and their opponents had turned into fanatical hatred. The Nazis used every method of provocation, and through the corruption of the camp administration the spy system was introduced and misused by the N.K.V.D. With the reappearance of Herr Wagner as camp instructor, they held all the trump cards. Even so, their political arguments could not have

been taken seriously. 'Assi' Hahn, a commander from my old squadron, who had been one of the most daring pilots on the Channel coast, embraced me heartily in spite of all political differences. He suddenly slapped me on the back and said:

'Your arguments may be right, but I must say I should like to fly with you against the "Tommys" again!' Once at Cherbourg he had given us his idea of the best life after the war:

'Why not live in Russia?' he had said. 'I should like to be in command of an airfield in peacetime, on the coast of the Black Sea say, and run a large estate near by—then I should make those Russian serfs understand all right. . . .' And he had made a movement as if he were lashing someone with a whip. On another occasion in Oranki prison, he had jumped up in the middle of a speech by Walter Ulbricht and shouted: 'Even if there are only twelve million of us left, we shall fight on till final victory!'

My own commander, who was present when I had been shot down by the enemy, and with whom I had flown in maybe a hundred engagements during which we had often saved each other's lives, now refused to speak to me. He even refused to let me know through a third person what he had told my relatives when I had not returned from the attack.

A captain from one of the Stalingrad Tank Divisions, a nephew of Rundstedt, said in a discussion with Lattmann and me: 'We Germans want to see the sunny side of our life for once. We want to live like the Dutch colonial gentleman, compared to whose villas in the Hague the most beautiful houses in Berlin-Dahlem are dog kennels. If we cannot succeed in this, Germany might as well perish.'

When Lattmann asked him whether one could sacrifice millions of lives for such an aim, expose millions of women and children, to air attacks, he replied with pathos: 'My wife is the wife of a soldier—she must be prepared to die like me.' But he was unable to answer when asked why he had given himself up at Stalingrad against Hitler's direct orders.

However, there were some fine fellows among our opponents who called themselves National Socialists with a steadfastness and

visit to Seydlitz by Colonel-General Sherbakov, Manuilski's successor as head of the political administration of the Red Army, showed how greatly this idea interested the Russian Government. Sherbakov was a member of the Council of Five, the actual Soviet War Cabinet, in which even Stalin only figured as *primus inter pares*.

Seydlitz, Korfes, Hadermann, and Major Lewerenz left for the front in the Pullman carriage of Sherbakov's special train. They arrived at the Watutin's Army group where Colonel Steidle and Major Büchler were already busy preparing a propaganda action on a grand scale, to be put over to the encircled armies. All the generals and higher officers of the National Committee had addressed letters to the commanders they knew personally. In these letters they implored their comrades not to allow the encircled armies near Cherkassy to suffer a second Stalingrad but to refuse to obey Hitler and thereby save the lives of 75,000 German soldiers in their care by orderly and timely capitulation. This would mean a decisive political blow to Hitler. Seydlitz and Korfes had also addressed the encircled staff directly through the radio and received confirmation that their transmission had been heard. Full of expectation, Germans and Russians were waiting to see whether the commanders of the encircled armies would decide to open negotiations with the Committee. But there was no reply. Both armies were handicapped by a sudden wet period which turned the ground to mud. Stubborn battles continued for the narrow strip which separated the pocket from the main front. Hitler had ordered the encircled troops to commit suicide if they could not be relieved in time. Finally, when the encircled troops were concentrated in the narrowest possible space, a shock troop made up of all the units still fit for battle succeeded in breaking through at night, leaving all the wounded and equipment behind. Eighteen thousand prisoners remained in Russian hands. On the battlefield lay 10,000 German soldiers. Among the dead was the commanding general of the XI Corps, Stemmermann, the senior commander of the pocket.

The battle was another big military success for the Russians. For the Committee it was a definite defeat. It was true that, for

the first time, several hundred soldiers and officers referred themselves to the National Committee, but without any real idea or knowledge of what it stood for. But the generals had ignored us. One could not tell whether it was that they continued to believe in Hitler and in the possibility of favourable peace, or whether it was because they refused to work with us and the Russians. The fact that Paulus and the majority of the Stalingrad generals kept silent throughout must have made our propaganda appear very unconvincing in their eyes.

28th March, 1944

On the 27th March, General Melnikov, the Russian liaison officer with the National Committee, invited Seydlitz, Lattmann and several members of the National Committee, including myself, to a discussion. This discussion had a story behind it.

At the beginning of January *Tass* had published an official statement on Soviet-Polish relations. Although the Soviet Government had maintained no official relations with the London Poles on account of their attitude over the Katyn murders, they now invited them to join in the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of Friendship, making it clear at the same time that the eastern frontier of Poland could not extend beyond the so-called Curzon Line. This line, which had been decided upon by the Supreme Allied Council in 1919, and which gave the western part of the Ukraine and western White Russia to the Soviet Union, corresponded with the demarcation line worked out between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. The Poles naturally insisted on the frontiers which they had forced the Soviet Union to agree to in the Treaty of Riga in 1921. The Soviet Union, for its part, promised Poland, more or less as compensation in the west, the annexation of territory which had formerly belonged to Germany, but which was really Polish and which was necessary to Poland if her people were to be reunited in one State, and, which, moreover, would provide her with the necessary outlet to the sea.

The Soviet Press comments left no doubt as to what the territories were to which this elastic formula referred: large

sections of Silesia, Pomerania and East Prussia. In addition to this, Churchill made a declaration in which he demanded 250 miles of coastline for Poland on the Baltic Sea to the west of Königsberg.

All this had, of course, profoundly shocked the Committee. Even the Moscow refugees did not know what line to take. Pomerania, Silesia and East Prussia had been used by Hitler as jumping-off grounds against Poland, therefore, they said, Poland had a right to these territories in the interest of self-protection. This was their incredibly stupid comment on these arrangements. In reality they knew, of course, that it was no longer a question of Germany, but that here, for the first time, the battle for power had begun between Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries; that it was a race for the favour of Poland at the expense of Germany. Poland would only be able to hold these territories if she were protected by Soviet Russia from the rear—i.e. was pro-Soviet in outlook. It was easier for the Communists on the Committee to resign themselves to this solution. To them, the power and security of the Soviet Union was a first principle which they knew to be the backbone of the Communist world-movement. National interests must be subordinate to the interests of the revolution; such was their slogan. If one adhered to this, the situation really did not look too bad. The only solution to the German-Polish frontier question was, in fact, a real federation of the kind which should be possible among Socialist States. The frontier question should be no problem between a Socialist Poland and a Socialist Germany. Molotov had declared in the autumn of 1939 that the Poland of Pilsudski's days, which had lived by oppressing other nations and which had been designed at Versailles as part of the *cordon sanitaire* against the Soviet Union, as well as a pistol in Germany's back, must not be allowed to rise again. If the Soviet Union was today taking up a rather different line it was for tactical considerations of the moment and was not to be taken too seriously. Time was still young and a great deal would depend on when and under what conditions the Third Reich came to a final end.

The right-wing members of the Committee refused even to

discuss this 'dialectical' behaviour. They merely declared that this attitude was a return to imperialistic methods and a flagrant violation of all Marxist and international principles. The Communist 'sympathisers', on the other hand, did not fail to point out to their comrades of the 'Right' that Churchill's proposal was a violation of the Atlantic Charter.

All this was too much for the generals: first the discussions on the propaganda at the front, then the disaster of Cherkassy and finally this! In their Sunday villa to which the Russians always used to drive them at week-ends, they had decided to send a memorandum to the Russians suggesting a reorganisation of the Committee. Only generals and members of the Reichstag were to be elected to the board of the Committee, which would thus acquire the character of a government-in-exile to which the Russians would give guarantees regarding future German frontiers. It looked as if the vodka they consumed in their week-end villa, in the company of prominent refugees and Russian officers, had gone to their heads. But they did, in fact, have such a document drafted by the First Lieutenant of the Reserve, Huber, an S.S. officer and peacetime section chief at the German Ministry of Education. Behind the Committee's back they handed it to Melnikov's personal adviser, Colonel Schwetz. But, after a week, the latter gave them back the document with the ironical comment that, in the interest of the ten undersigned members of the executive committee of the Officers' League, he had considered it best not to pass it on to his superiors. Can one imagine it: a handful of generals, prisoners of war, with not even a following worth speaking of in the camps, who had no other significance except that of a propaganda façade, demanding political guarantees for post war developments from one of the most powerful countries conducting the war! Their lack of perspective had made them believe that they could further their personal ambitions while sitting in their villa drinking vodka and wine from the Crimea. They thought that they would succeed not only in having the officers and soldiers of whom they disapproved turned out of the Committee, but also in outplaying the Moscow émigrés. When they received Schwetz's reply, 'The

Company of the Ten Honest Men' broke up immediately. Seydlitz had to apologise to the Committee for 'violating the democratic principle' and he received a real dressing down from Melnikov.

When we were all assembled, Melnikov asked Seydlitz to fetch a copy of the manifesto and read it aloud. I wanted to spare Seydlitz the humiliation, and offered to do both these things for him. But Melnikov insisted that Seydlitz do it personally—just like a naughty schoolboy being punished. He even made Seydlitz repeat certain passages, such as: 'If the German people continue to let themselves be led towards destruction without raising a hand they will not only become weaker every day, but also their guilt will become deeper. Then it will only be possible to overthrow Hitler with the help of foreign arms. This would mean the end of our national independence; it would mean the breaking up of our Fatherland. And we could blame nobody but ourselves. If, on the other hand, the German people pull themselves together in time and prove by their actions that they really want to be a free people and that they are resolved to liberate Germany from Hitler, then they will have gained the right to decide their own future and demand the respect of the world. This is the only road to preserve the meaning of freedom and the honour of the German nation.'

When Seydlitz finished reading, Melnikov put these questions to him!

'Have you signed this manifesto? Do you believe that this political judgment of the situation is right?' Seydlitz replied to both these questions in the affirmative. Then Melnikov continued:

'In that case, you will also understand that the fate of Germany and therefore of its frontiers lies entirely and only in the hands of the German people. Do all that is in your power to encourage the German people to overthrow Hitler. The sooner this happens, the more advantageous the peace negotiations will be for Germany. Strengthen the National Committee and refrain from anything which may prejudice its political significance.' With these words, Melnikov left the room.

7th May, 1944

During the night, Lieutenant Huber was arrested by the N.K.V.D. and taken away. Since morning, everybody in the house was bustling about like a scared swarm of bees. Gradually it became known what it was all about. Huber had not only been an S.S. officer, but he was also a fanatical Nazi and had worked with the Gestapo. He had only joined the Committee in order to work against it from within. Seydlitz's memorandum had been inspired by him. He had hoped that once the generals had gone as far as that they would be too proud to retreat from their position and that it would cause the break-up of the Committee. When this plan failed, he tried to persuade some of the officers who were to be sent to the front to escape to the German Army in order to give information about the Committee, disclose its place of operation, and to propose finally that it be kidnapped by parachute troops. But he had taken too many people into his confidence. The plan was betrayed to the N.K.V.D. and the accomplices were arrested on Moscow station.

CHAPTER VII

The Anti-Fascist School

5th July, 1944

A FEW weeks after the Huber affair, the Communist refugees asked Major Bechler and me whether we would be interested in taking a course at the anti-Fascist school. I gladly agreed to this proposal, particularly as life in the house of the National Committee had taken on an extremely unsatisfactory character. Though nobody wanted to admit it to himself, we were all becoming increasingly aware that our efforts connected with the newspaper and the radio transmissions, and our discussions about the leaflets and manifestos, fell into a vacuum, and that we were, in fact, separated from Germany and the German Army by an unbridgeable abyss.

I also felt myself fundamentally a Communist. I had diligently continued my Marxist reading and I can only say that this clear, strictly realistic religion of reason had a magical attraction for me. Apart from merciless criticism of existing society, a society sinking into chaos, here was a plan for a new order which promised to solve and overcome all conflicts and contradictions, whether they arose from world wars, economic catastrophes, need, misery or despair—so that men might live peacefully together. Here were none of the inevitable accompaniments of politics and power politics, no pretty speeches about the rights of man, but only a love for peace and honesty. Terror, force, deceit and lies, however, acquired a new meaning; the end justified the means. This courage to carry things to their logical conclusion in thought and action fascinated me. It was not only the comparison between the free and humanitarian aim of this theory with the blood theory and chosen-race myth of the Nazis which made it appear attractive; it also compared well with that order we call democracy, which, at a moment

of economic and political chaos, was driven to bankruptcy and allowed Hitler and his philistines to mobilise the great dormant powers of the German people and to use them for their ends.

There seemed no reason to doubt that one could trace back the greater part of all tensions and conflicts in modern society—especially the terrible conflict between the individual and society—to the grotesquely false relationship between the ownership of the means of production and the productive organisation, to the struggle between capital and labour, between private ownership and collective ownership. If this were so, nothing could be more natural and obvious than to adjust these conditions of ownership to the collective character of modern production—even by force if necessary.

Marxism had taught me to see the development of events in a new light. The same thing happened to many of the young officers and soldiers who were picked from the camps and sent to the anti-Fascist school. All the meaningless and inexplicable things we had experienced suddenly had a meaning, an explanation. This was a world in agony which had lost its right to existence, a world going through the birth pains of a new epoch. Whereas before we had been unable to distinguish between good and bad, between truth and falsehood; whereas conceptions of bravery, honour, Fatherland, justice, freedom and duty had lost their meaning to us and had become merely high-sounding phrases, we now found a new standard of judgment, a new aim; Socialism, the free brotherly community of all peoples and all nations.

It was true that life in the Soviet Union did not come up to the Marxist ideal. We began by examining our own personal position as prisoners of war. We had by no means got to know the best side of the Soviet Union. Not even the most fanatical Communists could argue away the inhuman suffering and hardships borne by us, which had caused the death of so many of our comrades. But we were prepared to draw a veil over the past. General Tulpanov had been right, after all, when he had said to

me, on September 4th, 1942, that we had not exactly come into this country as guests. We had come as an army bringing death and destruction to the land, as soldiers of a régime which was guilty of terrible crimes against the population and against their prisoners of war and which was now disclaiming all interest in us prisoners. It was clear that these undeniable facts were bound to have painful results for us. But the suffering we underwent in prison was due less to ill-will than to lack of imagination, lack of efficiency, and a corruption which was almost oriental in character. It would have been unfair to the Soviet Union to allow these things to influence us in our judgment of it as a whole. Furthermore, one should not forget that the material standard of life of the Soviet population was far and away behind the standard in the capitalist countries, and not even the terrible destruction of this war was sufficient explanation of this gulf. Whether it was the standard of nutrition, housing conditions, clothing, daily articles of use such as sewing needles, electric bulbs, saucepans, radios, motor cycles or cars, there was no comparison. I was prepared to recognise that the young Soviet régime had taken over a poor inheritance here: it was a country which, in its technical development, was fifty to a hundred years behind the rest of Europe; a country which, owing to war, revolution and civil war, the latter partly stirred up from without, had been completely laid waste; where seventy-five per cent of the population was illiterate and had no contacts with the modern world. One could not deny that, when judged in this light, much had been achieved in barely twenty years of peace.

But had the people become better human beings under the new system? Had the principle of each individual struggling for himself and only the fittest surviving been replaced by a new social conscience? Were the people more helpful, more just, more honest, less envious, more brotherly in their relations with one another? Had harmony between the individual and society become a reality? Did the individual have a sense of responsibility towards society as a whole? And did society in turn protect the rights and freedom of the individual?

The answer to these questions was certainly negative. On

the contrary, instead of the sense of duty we took for granted, with a customary regard for certain standards of right and decency, instead of tradition, the revolution in Russia had apparently created a vacuum which, despite daily uninterrupted instruction, pronouncements and commands, it seemed unable to fill. In Western Europe there existed a tradition, whereby peasants, craftsmen, intellectuals and labourers alike believed in taking pains and felt pride in a well-finished job; in Western Europe there had come into existence over the centuries an increasing desire for a minimum standard of orderliness and cleanliness even among the masses, and, in spite of all the existing social injustices, there could be found everywhere sympathy for the misfortunes and sufferings of humanity. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, there was an attitude of indifference and indolence which had something chaotic about it. There was a kind of insensitivity to one's own and other people's sufferings which was frightening because too often it was the result of inhumanity. The prisoners of war could certainly have spoken of this.

The revolution may have broken innumerable bonds and barriers, which, under Tsarism, had retarded the development of the people. But at the same time it had destroyed many existing traditions of European culture which, so far, it had not been able to replace with anything new. The short period of intoxication with freedom and the revolutionary *elan* of the twenties, during which experiments had been made to try to reform social customs from one day to the next according to the most modern theories, giving the individual the utmost possible freedom and responsibility, had now given way to an unparalleled degree of interference by authority with the private life of society and of the individual. But, although the past thirty years could show enormous technical and economic achievements, they also had subjected man to the demoralising conditions of misery, deprivation, hunger and the struggle for power. Could one therefore expect already to find a new and better generation of people? Could envy, hate and the lust for power have disappeared already from the heart of man? No, it was unlikely, nor could one expect it. One could expect it even less from the vast, illiterate, peasant population, which had

refused to co-operate and had had to be driven with an iron fist along the path which the Bolsheviks were determined that it should take. The authorities had, in this, no alternative, if they wanted to avoid the dangers which Gorki had once foreseen. Gorki had said that the peasant masses with their animal individualism, their anarchy and their complete lack of social conscience were in danger of swamping the entire Russian revolutionary intelligentsia. Yes! It was impossible to ignore the fact that the Soviet Union was governed by 'a dictatorship of the proletariat', which centralised everything to the last degree. No constitution, no boasts of a universal, equal and secret vote, could hide the fact that this dictatorship of the proletariat was in reality (as Lenin had said) the dictatorship of a strictly disciplined, chosen group based on the principle of subordination, or even of a few leading men within the group. If 'dictatorship means a state which is organised on the basis of force', if 'the heads of such a state are identical with the heads of the Party', if 'not a single important decision on any large-scale organisation or of any state authority is made without direction from the Party',¹ then, there is no longer any real difference between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the leaders.

To prove that a difference existed, Stalin wrote a thesis entitled *The Party and the Working-class within the System of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. His argument was as follows:

1. 'The dictatorship of the proletariat does not only consist in control by the Party, but in seeing that its directions are carried out by the masses.'
2. 'The Party must always take into account the political maturity, consciousness and capabilities of the masses.'
3. 'The Party and its members must not try to replace the State organisation. The authority of the Party can be based only on the confidence of the working class; confidence is not to be gained by force.'
4. 'The Party members are only a drop in the ocean compared

¹ All quotations from Stalin's *Leninism*

with the mass of the people; they can only govern if they know how to interpret the will of the people correctly.'

All this becomes meaningless once the leaders of the Party have the power to decide on what lines the people and the Party members may think; if opposition, or the attempt to alter the Party line in any way, means suicide because the Party 'can and must force the minority to subordinate itself to the will of the majority.'¹ If even an inner-party democracy no longer exists, so that whenever a Party group comes to power it cannot be forced to resign, then what Stalin himself predicted is bound to happen. The Party will no longer try to persuade, but will command, saying to the people: 'Do not dare to argue, for the Party is all-powerful.'

To express such views in the anti-Fascist school was considered highly heretical and brought danger of expulsion. Yet each one of us knew what it meant when 'realistic Soviet democracy' was referred to as against 'bourgeois, formal democracy'. But even though such things must be regarded as evil and as harbingers of dire consequences which only too closely recalled the practices of the Gestapo, perhaps they should also be regarded as inevitable. An army involved in a battle for life or death has no time for democratic discussion. And what were the Communists but an army supported by the poorest and most ignorant of people, fighting an enemy who held all the advantages: money, power, education, experience in government and the conduct of wars, in tradition and long standing authority. The Communists had to win the confidence of these primitive masses in the first place in order to come to power. But could they give them the right to self-determination from one day to the next? Would the masses understand that to have won power in one country was only the first step towards building a new and better society, that unending sacrifices and deprivations would have to be made before it was proved that the new order was not only better in theory, but also in practice. Had it not been the tragic fate of many

¹ Stalin was not referring to a minority of exploiters, but to one within the Party.

revolutions to have rejoiced in their success too soon and to have suffered decisive defeat thereafter owing to their underestimation of the unscrupulousness and toughness of their opponents? Nobody has described this conflict better than Gorki when he commented on what Lenin said while listening to the Sonata Appassionata: 'I know nothing more beautiful than the Appassionata and could listen to it every day. It is wonderful, almost super-human, music. It always makes me thrill with warmth and pride to think that man can produce such wonders! It deeply touches one's nerves. One feels like saying something loving, something silly and stroking the head of men who can live in such purgatory and yet produce such beauty! But today we must not stroke people's hair—if we did, our hand would be bitten off. Today we must bang them on the head—bang them mercilessly, though ideally we are against using any form of force against man. How damnably hard is our task!'

And Gorki added to this: 'The task of an honest leader of the people is inhumanly hard. It is impossible to imagine a leader who is not to some extent a tyrant. More people have probably been killed under Lenin than were killed under Wat Tyler, Thomas Münzer and Garibaldi together. But opposition against the revolution led by Lenin was organised on a far larger scale. We must also bear in mind that the importance attached to the life of the individual apparently decreases with progress and civilisation. The development in the technique of destroying man, and his pronounced taste for this occupation, bear testimony to this. Let the voice of conscience speak: is not the hypocritical attitude of those moralists who now talk of the bloodthirsty Russian revolution completely uncalled for and in fact repellent, when for four years of shameful world slaughter they had no sympathy with the millions of men who were slaughtered, but on the contrary tried to continue the war to "unconditional surrender"?''

Yes, the false sympathy which Gorki speaks of is all the more uncalled for, since today the world has been plunged into another even more horrible and destructive war and since there seems no way of avoiding a third and perhaps final catastrophe except by a Socialist revolution. Such a revolution is in full swing in the

whole world today, nor is it over in Russia. As in all political wars in history, it is in process of using power and applying force, of lying, blackmail and exploiting the baser instincts of men, with all the demoralising effects that are bound to be produced on the rulers and the ruled. However much this battle may degrade mankind and foster the dark, revengeful instincts of the masses who want to destroy what is noble and good, the ideal towards which man is being led must triumph, must awaken the consciousness of human dignity, and must lead to inner perfection and the curbing of lower instincts.

My teacher at the anti-Fascist school was Zaisser—a former officer of the German Imperial Army, who, during the battles in the Ruhr area, had fought on the side of the insurgent workers against the Freikorps. Later, he had been leader of the military organisation of the German Communist Party, a Comintern agent in Germany and China, Commander of the International Brigade's base in Spain and finally inmate of a Soviet concentration camp. He was one of those Communists who made a deep impression on all who met him, a man who still had some idea of how people in the rest of the world live and think, a man not weighed down by dogma, who could listen to criticism, and with whom one could talk openly without having the feeling that one would immediately be considered an 'enemy' and reported to the N.K.V.D. Lindau was in charge of the German section, a pre-1914 Social-Democrat and later a Spartacist, the street-corner agitator type. Behind a repulsive exterior and fanatical revolutionary hatred he was, in fact, a man full of kindness, understanding and sensitivity. Compared with these two teachers, all the others faded into insignificance.

There were four hundred men at this school, among them Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Rumanians and Italians. Of these the two hundred Germans had been divided up into groups of thirty, like the cadets of a military college. For the first time half the students were officers. We were given ten hours of instruction a day, of which four to six hours were devoted to lectures. The remaining hours were spent in reading books of one's own choice. Lectures were delivered on such subjects as dialectical

and historical Marxism, German and Russian history and economics, the history of working-class movements, and imperialism. I was continually asking myself to what extent the students were taking all this in and how many would later become honest, active Communists. The students from the other ranks were mostly men who had swum with the tide, had joined the movement in their camps, and had then been picked for the school. Some students were even writing reports for the N.K.V.D. But many lacked the mental capacity and the education necessary to comprehend the lectures. Among the officers, however, the situation was different. They had to swim against the stream. There were far fewer opportunists among them, though there were many who had never had a civilian career and who were now looking for an opportunity to build a background to their lives through politics and the Party.

22nd July, 1944

The news of the attempt on Hitler's life and the failure of the revolt of the generals, reached us today. When we first heard the news there was no end to our rejoicings. I was hardly able to control myself with excitement and joy. But gradually it became clear that Hitler was still alive, that several of the conspirators had already been murdered, and that the Gestapo continued to rule the country. I cannot describe my feelings. All our hopes that the country would free itself by its own strength were now gone!

The Communists were also very cast down. They, too, were homesick though they would never admit it. Only a few extremists found the Fatherland of Socialism so wonderful that they did not wish to return to Germany, and even in their cases it was clear that they were attempting to deceive themselves.

26th July, 1944

Herrnstadt arrived for a visit from Moscow. He was one of those ice-cold theoreticians, though his intelligence made him more tolerable than Ulbricht's type. But his cynicism was baffling.

His analysis of the 20th July plot was as follows: "The *putsch* was nothing but an attempt by the ruling classes in Germany to free themselves from the Praetorian Guard. In order to avoid the revolution which was imminent, they had once called in these men and had then become their prisoners. Now, under the orders of the heavy industrialists, the generals were to overthrow Hitler and thereby clear the path for a capitalist democracy. Here are the proofs:

1. The influential positions in industry held by Witzleben's relations.

2. The attempts of the conspirators to get in touch with the Western Allies.'

Herrnstadt was moreover of the opinion that the failure of the *putsch* had given Hitler an opportunity to continue the war and that all the powers who were holding back the advance of Communism in Europe must now finally be destroyed with him. The Western Powers had gambled on Germany and Russia destroying one another while *they* would come out of the war unscathed and smiling. Churchill in particular had, over and over again, sabotaged the opening of a Second Front. The Western Powers' offensive was opened in Africa and Italy in 1943 instead of in France in the hopes of being able to gain a firm footing in the Balkans and keep the Soviet Union out. But this had only had the opposite effect. It had made it easier for Hitler to defend Europe and thereby to prolong the war, and had given the Red Army time to advance farther into Central Europe. It was only when it became clear that the Soviet Union would already, this year, reach the German frontiers that the West had decided to undertake the final blow, in spite of the fact that now the German forces along the Channel were stronger than they had been in the previous year. If the *putsch* of July 20th had been successful, it would have been invaluable to the Western Allies and the consequences of their former miscalculation would have been much diminished. But its failure would now help the advance of Communism in Europe.

Maybe Herrnstadt was right. I was never able to understand why the Second Front had not started long ago. As early as the

spring of 1942, the German Staff in France was daily and anxiously expecting a landing, so weak were our defences. By 1944 they had, of course, been strengthened and, as far as one could tell from the reports of prisoners, we had a much stronger Army there than we had had in 1943.

However, to rejoice at the failure of the *putsch* because it helped the Communist Party was really going too far.

I asked Herrnstadt whether he could be certain that there had not been among the conspirators many men from the old Reichswehr circle who had always believed in working with Russia. He assumed an air of secrecy and said nothing. I then asked him what his attitude was towards our National Committee, as it was surely for a coup such as that of July 20th that it had been founded. 'That is different,' he said; 'the Committee is controlled by us, and in the case of a successful German opposition movement it would have ensured us some influence. We had to be prepared for such a possibility and could not isolate ourselves.'

This was not the first time that Herrnstadt had so bluntly disclosed the intentions of the Central Committee of the Party. He had told Herr von Fränkenberg several months ago that men such as he were only temporary allies. When Frankenberg had complained about this to the Communists and the Russians they replied that Herrnstadt's opinion was not authoritative, but only a left-wing deviation. The Communists were 'democrats' with a right to their own opinions. Maybe the reason for the definite lack of interest on the part of the Communists in making our propaganda at the front a success could be found in Herrnstadt's statement. Perhaps they were not at all interested in the success of the Committee, but merely regarded it as a Trojan horse in the event of a non-Communist opposition movement getting the upper hand.

This may have been a rather dangerous suspicion. Nevertheless, the Communists never felt bound to refrain on moral grounds from common action with the most fanatical Nazis. 'The end justifies the means' was their foremost principle. They had only one loyalty: devotion to the Party. They considered it honourable to behave dishonourably under all circumstances, if by so doing

they served the Party. All ethical conceptions were measured by the ultimate aim and were relative to it; or was it that they then became absolute?

At all events, a great deal of self-respect, honesty and 'prejudice' had to be sacrificed if their demands were to be satisfied. The human being as a personality did not count; he was only a tool, a means to an end. The end, the final aim, was, however, the liberation of personality. The Party still preferred to find a student from the anti-Fascist school who became a Communist from conviction, rather than someone who had become a Communist under pressure from N.K.V.D. But this only meant that the Party had not yet rid itself of its 'prejudices'. According to their form of logic it should make no difference since it was usefulness which was important. 'We, of the Party . . .' Herrnstadt had said. So I was included in this—a tool with some reservations. 'Too weak, too much sentiment, too much emotion, too little discipline', would be the verdict—though Zaisser told me that in giving his opinion of me to the Central Committee he had said that I might one day become a very useful Party member. In the meantime, owing to my heretical views on some questions, the anti-Fascist students had christened me the 'feudal bourgeois'. If, in spite of everything, they did not count me as an enemy, it was only because they realised that I was frank with them. It was clear to me from the very beginning that there was no sense in my pretending to views which I did not hold.

Major Homann was an example of the opposite type. He used to think that he was being especially clever if he carefully weighed every word he said, if he agreed with the Communists over everything, and he always waited for the official Communist line on all tricky questions. I admired, indeed, the self-discipline with which he played his comedy. But two or three times he acted his part badly and it weighed heavily against him. The Communists knew how ambitious he was, but he was too clever, too diplomatic for them. This did not win him any friends, though they were very pleasant to him.

If I was forced to gamble, I preferred to stake my future on fairness, honesty and decency rather than on political astuteness.

Some days before, during a discussion in Zaisser's group, a comparison had been drawn between the Red Army and the Wehrmacht. The points for debate were: the morale of the fighting troops, their humanity, and atrocities against prisoners. Everything which was said at this discussion was an attempt to give a good mark to the Red Army. I felt that a man like Zaisser was bound to sense the false tone of these statements and I made no secret of the opinion I had formed on these matters in the Ukraine. Zaisser turned on me sharply: 'This is racialism, an offence against the Soviet people!' He could not, of course, react in any other way.

14th August, 1944

'I, a son of the German nation, out of passionate love for my people, for my Fatherland and for my family, swear to fight for the freedom and happiness of my country, until the shame and disgrace of Fascist barbarism has been expunged and Hitler's Fascism exterminated. I swear to take merciless measures against anyone who breaks this oath. If I should break this oath and thereby become a traitor to my people, my family and my Fatherland—my life shall be forfeit. May the hatred and scorn of all honest men fall on me and may my comrades in battle judge me as befits a traitor and enemy of his people.'

Two hundred newly made anti-Fascists were forgathered in the cellar of the anti-Fascist school, which had been draped with red flags, in order, with raised fists, to repeat this bombastic oath after one of the teachers.

I could have laughed aloud at this performance, which was more like a conspiratorial scene in a third-rate movie than a solemn ceremony. But I remained silent with shame.

Zaisser assured me that this form of oath was necessary, as many of the students would be sent out on illegal work behind the front and inside Germany. Its memory would be likely to help one or other of them to remain steadfast in critical moments of moral doubt. One sentence devoted to the oath and five sentences threatening punishment and retribution! An oath taken in an

atmosphere which was anything but free! I felt physical disgust and violent hatred against myself for taking part. If only I had had sufficient courage to have refused to repeat these sentences! It was not because I had anything to fear in solemnly pledging myself to fight against Hitler. Except for the fact that I did not have a high opinion of my powers of resistance in the event of physical torture I had no reason to be afraid that I would ever break it. Yet never in the whole period of imprisonment had I been so embarrassed as I was during the taking of this oath.

We were all in such a position that it would have required too much courage to refuse. It would have meant immediate expulsion from the school, and would have brought about unpredictable consequences.

How undignified was the suspicion which dominated the entire wording of the oath! And yet it was understandable. How could one be certain that any man said what he really thought? And this applied to the Russian leader of the school, to the teachers, and to the humblest student. It was not sufficient to recognise the principles of Communism and to be prepared to act as a Communist. No, every single word from Stalin's mouth, every propaganda line of *Pravda*, every Party directive had to be regarded as the last word in wisdom, almost as divine revelation. Criticism and an independent opinion were sacrilege and treason. An unprecedented system of control was established to see that every sin against this monolithic spirit was recorded.

In the National Committee it was possible to avoid obeying the N.K.V.D.'s orders concerning the giving of information about one's comrades. (According to the N.K.V.D., this was one of the obligations of working loyally with the Soviet Union, and Major Stern had made me agree to this in Camp 27. It was only after I had several times given him my opinion of the secret agents on the National Committee that he had left me in peace.) An anti-Fascist who was not prepared to report his student comrades might have succeeded in convincing his teachers that he was nevertheless a true Communist, but the N.K.V.D. would certainly have marked him down as a potential enemy. I am convinced that

at least ninety per cent of the students were involved in giving information of this kind in one form or another and that a large percentage, purely out of fear, had tried to produce during these interrogations at least a little evidence against their comrades, in order not to become suspect themselves.

A short while before this, for example, I had a talk with a comrade about a photograph in *Pravda* of two Russian prisoners, worn to skeletons, who had been liberated by the Red Army from a German extermination camp. 'So what?' said the lieutenant. 'We looked exactly the same when we were in Yelabuga.' He was right, of course. Almost every prisoner of 1942 and 1943 had once looked like this. But I disagreed with him that one could compare the two things; the systematic extermination which went on in the S.S. concentration camps had nothing in common with the hunger and hardships we had suffered. The latter had been a result of thoughtless corruption, and a general state of austerity, and was not, like the murders of the Nazis, organised and desired by the Government.

Our entire group gradually joined in this quarrel and after a lively argument for and against, we finally put the question to Zaisser. He was a man with whom one could talk about these things and whom we all held in high esteem. But the result was the immediate removal of the lieutenant from the school. It was said that many such 'unfriendly remarks' about the Soviet Union had already been reported against him by his comrades, the school executive, and the N.K.V.D. As I felt myself partly to blame, since I had started the discussion, I asked Zaisser to intervene on behalf of the young man, especially as he was one of the most honest men among us. Zaisser assured me that he had already done this, but that he was powerless to do anything as the N.K.V.D. itself had been responsible for the disappearance of our comrade.

These were the circumstances under which we were expected to practise confession and self-criticism. Everyone of us had to relate his life story and examine his social and political attitude in front of his comrades. The others were supposed to criticise what was said, in order to help 'discover one's weaknesses'. In some cases,

definite impostors were unmasked. Alleged former members of the Red Front League turned out, under the cross-examination of their comrades, to have been high-ranking S.A. leaders; or alleged officers were found to be non-commissioned officers downgraded for criminal offences; alleged intellectuals persecuted by the Nazis turned out to have been working with them. Only in one such case was the culprit not expelled from the school. Dr Kröger, a tall, lanky, anaemic lawyer, who had been forced to admit that he had worked for the Security Service, was allowed to remain at the school and was even appointed assistant teacher on the next course of lectures. It was the wish of the N.K.V.D. and the teachers had to submit.

Did these revelations justify the forced public confessions, during which one's entire life, including its most private details, had to be disclosed, and in which a great deal of self-accusation was necessary if one did not want to be exposed to the most annihilating indictments from one's 'comrades'? Lucky was the man who was able to content himself by stating that, as a person not interested in politics, he had failed to take part in shaping the political fate of his country and had thereby indirectly helped the Nazis.

Those who could not conceal the fact that they did not belong to the indifferent middle class, but, on the contrary, had held convictions and taken up a stand, had to be prepared to undergo endless cross-examination and were not left in peace until they had admitted how wrong and sinful their earlier life had been. It was almost impossible to escape from this inquisition: 'Did you eat sweets secretly when you were a child? Did you masturbate? Did you seduce working-class girls? Was your father socially active? Did your mother read the *Grüne Post*? Do you play cards?' They continued with these questions until the unfortunate victim became quite tied up and nervous and began to look for excuses for some 'immoral adventure' he had once lightheartedly mentioned in the circle of his comrades. He would become more and more muddled and crushed, and finally, to avoid any further questions, would make a declaration of guilt, saying he was guilty of all possible offences against the Party's moral

code, the only soul-saving code, and would promise to repent and change his ways.

An amusing side-show happened at one of these public confessions. One of the most active and intelligent students, and an outspoken anti-Nazi, took it into his head to admit that he was a homosexual, especially as he remembered that the Socialists had declared that they were against the persecution of homosexuals. Violent indignation ensued. Homosexuality was a typical sign of the degeneracy of the parasitical ruling classes, the teachers remarked, shaking their heads. And from then onwards, a persecution of the careless confessor began, though he by no means belonged to the ruling class, but to the artisan middle class. The persecution was increased by the more or less unconscious jealousy of some of the comrades, who had already watched with a disapproving eye the friendship of this young man with a handsome youth from the Rhineland.

Then the head of the German section, Comrade Grätz, intervened—and this was real inspiration—and said that he would not permit these Nazi methods of defamation against an honest anti-Fascist. He said that he himself took great pleasure in being with younger comrades, and it was unworthy even of a bourgeois to suspect sexual perversion in every attachment of an older person to a young boy.

As a result an end was put to the persecution of this man. Sexual irregularities were, however, considered less serious than political deviation. It soon got around the school, amid much significant laughter, that the N.K.V.D. had discovered a new field for their activities. The astonished commissars were anxious to have the meaning of the word 'homosexuality' explained to them. Apparently they had never heard anything about this subject before. In the Soviet Union they subscribed to the motto: 'What must not be does not exist.' This phenomenon could be wiped out by never mentioning it, especially as it was difficult to fit it into their dogma. The fact that it had played a not-unimportant rôle in the cultural history of the last three thousand years did not matter.

Behind the audience of thirty, before which we had to appear, sat the real inquisitor, the commissar of the N.K.V.D., mechanic-

ally registering everything, making meticulous notes and petty observations, and often without any idea as to the meaning of what he was putting down, for his horizon was blocked with Soviet stars. He knew nothing of life beyond the frontiers of the Soviet Union. His world was an abstract construction built on Party dogma and propaganda themes which he had learned by heart, as we had once learned our catechism or the ballads of Uhland. In order to come out of the cross-examination undamaged when making one's confessions, it was important to find the balance between voluntary self-debasement and refined hypocrisy. In any case, the self-esteem and personality of the individual were undermined, and his past to a large extent destroyed. The more thoroughly this happened, the greater the value attached to criticism and self-criticism. Those who were made to feel completely at a loss were all the more likely to cling to the Party line, generously held out to them as the life-saver. Those who became so confused that they could no longer tell good from bad would be all the more grateful for having the Party take this decision for them. One's own conscience and an attitude of suspicion were to whip each other up to the point when there could no longer be any question of thinking for oneself or of having an objective interpretation of reality. The hope that one day, when the Soviet Union had caught up with the technical and economic advance of the rest of the world, and when revolution in other countries would help it out of her splendid isolation, life would at last become freer and more liberal was a poor consolation for those who now lived in an atmosphere poisoned by suspicion, hypocrisy and Byzantine intrigue.

When I made it a condition of my entry into the school that we be given permission to attend all the meetings of the Committee, that we have a room to ourselves, and that we be let off all school duties which were not directly connected with our work, the Communist proselytes of the Committee were very indignant. I had no intention of letting myself be subjected, without protest, to the practical Socialism of the recruits' barrack room which prevailed there. Also I wanted to avoid giving Seydlitz and Lattmann any further pretext for their eternal remarks such as:

'Einsiedel wears long hair to prove that he is a Communist', or 'Einsiedel agrees with everything the German refugees say.'

But our special position brought upon us the hostility and envy of the egalitarians at the school, especially as we refused to address everybody in the familiar second person singular. Why should we use this intimate form of address towards people we did not know at all? We had used it in the S.A. cafés, and in the Army barrack room, and it had not helped to produce real comradeship. I had spoken my mind on this subject and a few days later Zaisser sent for me and told me that complaints about my attitude had reached him. As reinsurance I pointed out that, unlike the German Communist Party, the Communist Party in the Soviet Union never used the familiar address. Zaisser approved our point of view and we would have had peace from any further attacks if it had not been for Bechler. Bechler capitulated to the general hostility and agreed to do his share of Sunday duties (behind my back, I may say).

My confession would certainly have become a battle for life and death, but Zaisser spared both Bechler and myself from this. He must have realised with what hatred they would have pounced on us, the privileged members of the Committee, especially on me, who, owing to my name, my youth, and my heretical point of view, acted as a constant irritant.

Why had he done this? Was it from personal feelings? Did the Party consider it inopportune to subject to such humiliations the first representative of the National Committee to attend the school? Or did his attitude merely conform to the general trend away from egalitarianism which was taking place in the Soviet Union?

The majority of the teachers certainly shared the hostility of the students towards anyone who showed any signs of resistance against collectivisation. (The word 'collectivisation' here had a very different meaning from our word, community. If what we had at the school could be called a community, one might as well say that bricks in a wall formed a community.) Privileges and favours had to be accepted here as gifts and rewards from the authorities—as a recognition that the only privilege which really

mattered, that of preserving one's own personality and convictions, had as far as possible been surrendered.

But what did this mean? Did not the Bolsheviks claim for themselves the highest imaginable privilege—to have overthrown a centuries-old order of society, to have destroyed all laws and traditions, to have arranged the world according to their conception and to have imposed on the ignorant masses their political principles and way of thinking? Here at the school, obedient citizens and rows of subordinates were drilled to receive orders, narrow-minded dogmatics and heresy hunters were being trained, but not a single revolutionary. What had been born of hardship and necessity, and against which the Party in Russia had had to fight during the formation of a new society—an iron Party discipline, enforced at the cost of the personality, initiative and creative thought of the individual, the complete lack of freedom of conscience and the mutual spy system—all this was now proclaimed as a virtue, and imposed on the Communist Parties outside the Soviet Union.

This development will surely have to cease of its own accord, as otherwise it must mean the death of Communism. Even the refugee Communists, once they get abroad again, will be forced to find their way back to thinking for themselves and to showing tolerance for divergent opinions. Among the students at the school, only those who could think for themselves would be able to stay the pace; the others would be blown apart like spray by the sharp winds of the revolutionary struggle, as soon as their orders failed to reach them according to plan.

22nd August, 1944

Plenary Session of the Committee and Seydlitz' birthday. Bechler and I were driven to Lunovo by car. It seemed to me that we had arrived in a madhouse.

I was still feeling the shock of July 20th, but the generals were living in a state of exaltation. When Seydlitz saw me, he forgot all his hatred, rushed towards me and took me into his room.

'In four weeks we shall be in Germany!' he shouted. 'The

other was only the beginning—but now things are going to happen! You will see!’ He showed me the draft of an appeal to the Northern Army group in the Baltic, which had been cut off for several days. In this appeal, which the Russians had already released to the Press, a guarantee was given to the army group that if it capitulated and went over to the side of the National Committee, its units would be preserved and the soldiers would be allowed to keep their small arms.

‘You see, the Russians too do not want to break up the formations,’ Seydlitz said, unable to resist throwing this in my face. ‘They want to keep the troops intact to preserve order just as we do.’

It would have been useless to make any reply. But the appeal was never sent out as the Germans finally succeeded in re-establishing contact with the Central Army group. In any case I had no chance to reply, because he at once turned to show me the enormous marzipan cake which the Russians had given him for his birthday. Four red roses made of almonds symbolised his four daughters. ‘Isn’t it charming, charming?’ he repeated. ‘A real work of art!’

The ‘little father’! as he was called since his attempt to form a ‘government’, was no longer in full possession of his senses. I muttered some polite remark and withdrew. Our doctors always maintained that Seydlitz suffered from manic depression. Now I began to believe them. The reason for his present phase of madness was the presence of von Paulus, Strecker and twenty other generals who had recently been taken prisoner on the central front. On August 8th, Paulus made a pronouncement against Hitler over our radio. All the generals signed the Russian leaflets appealing to the German people to stop the war. After this ‘victory’ over the field marshal and the influx of generals, Seydlitz no longer had to worry lest the military caste one day turned against him as a traitor and a renegade. This thought had been tormenting him. It was the same fear which had prompted Colonel-General Strecker—anxious not to fall short of Paulus’ example of fighting to the very last moment before he was captured—to continue his defence of the northern flank of the

encircled Army at Stalingrad for two terrible, bloody days, in spite of the appeal of the commanders of two regiments who implored him on their knees to capitulate. It was the fear of other people's judgment, the fear of making a decision, the desire to save face. But now Seydlitz felt himself to be justified. All his problems were forgotten and with them all sense of reality.

The Plenary Session was a kind of baptism for Paulus and for the central front generals. It was to demonstrate the wide field covered by the Committee. Seydlitz made a speech on the political and military situation. After a tearful introduction, during which he spoke of his three friends—an officer, a horse and a groom—he described, amid general laughter, how he had happened to take part in the foundation of the Officers' League. 'I was a hundred per cent against it,' he assured us. 'But after five minutes' conversation with Weinert and Pieck, I was won over. Korfes always writes my speeches for me, but I choose the theme.' And then followed a declaration of his philosophy, the first speech composed by himself:

'Though in rather constrained circumstances, I have now been living for over a year and a half in the Soviet Union, this land of present and future Socialism. In these eighteen months, I have made an honest effort to get to know this country, this nation and its Socialism, and, above all, the spirit, mind and heart of its people and its cultural civilisation. For this, it has been necessary to devote some attention to dialectical materialism and the theoretical teaching of Socialism, the teaching of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. During this study, I have discovered how great were the minds of the authors of these works which, I must admit, were almost unknown to me. Today, I bow my head in reverence before these great men, who have paved the way for a better world. Dialectical materialism, as it has been created and developed by them, is without a doubt one of the most progressive ideas in the world today. The Germany of the future, and in particular its social and democratic character, will be greatly influenced by this and by the Socialism which is based on it. Socialism will undoubtedly be one of the main pillars of the new Germany.

'However, the great ultimate ideas of the future which will unite people and nations in a common purpose and aim, cannot and will not be exclusively based on the principles of dialectical materialism. I am of the profound opinion that humanity needs in addition an idealistic philosophy, and that it cannot be without this if it is to achieve a true harmony in life, and in spiritual and material balance. Only if this is recognised will a lasting and truly peaceful community of nations be assured. The problem before the world today is to achieve progress through a combination of idealism and materialism. Developments in this country appear to be in that direction, if I see them correctly. '

'My views are undoubtedly influenced by the experiences of a long and active life. This life started in the year 1888, a year of great significance for our German nation, but its decisive period falls between the years 1914 and 1944. The violent shock of two world wars stood at the beginning and at the end of this period. The First World War began for me with the horror of the battle of Gumbinnen on August 20th, 1914, during which I was wounded three times. Only after the third time, when I was wounded in the head and in both hands, did I leave the battlefield. I looked as if someone had poured a bucket of blood over me. And when—on my birthday, thirty years ago today—I was the first wounded soldier to be taken to the hospital of my future father-in-law, my own father, who had been sent for, did not recognise me. The happy young lieutenant, who had so far not thought very deeply about the serious side of life, had turned into a different person. The Second World War ended for me with the grisly episode of Stalingrad. And then came the period of imprisonment with its valuable lessons which completed the whole experience. All these really big experiences shook me profoundly and have given me an insight of the kind which is perhaps only given to a few people in their lifetime, and which is only possible through great upheavals.

'I now see clearly and without a doubt, that certain transcendental and metaphysical forces have, over and over again, played a decisive part in determining my fate and life. It may be that my

blood relationship with the most idealistic of all great philosophers, Emmanuel Kant, has done something to give me an outlook which emphasises the idealistic side of life. I am an example of a heritage which runs completely counter to the ideal of Hitler. In me, mixed with my basic Prussian stock, is the blood of ancestors from England, France and Salzburg, who had all been turned out of their home countries on religious grounds and had found refuge in Prussia, which was then a progressive and freedom-loving country. In addition, on my father's side there is a mixture by marriage of Slav, West-Russian, Polish and Lithuanian blood. Also in my family, there is a branch which had at some time gone to America, the Mitchell branch, probably of Irish origin. I have therefore blood connections with nearly every country with which Germany is today at war. We probably all have such connections, but in my case they can all be traced. The picture will become even more complete, if I tell you that I have lived several years in the places which have for centuries been the bones of contention between Prussia on the one hand and Poland and France on the other, Danzig and Strasbourg.

"The terrible tragedy which we are witnessing today cannot, in my opinion, be understood if viewed only in the light of a materialistic conception of history. I am moreover convinced—it is, in fact, my firm belief—that higher forces are at work here. Things are completely upside down, paradoxical and grotesque these days. You must therefore not hold it against me, if, for once, I quote the saying of a man whom I regard as the absolute incarnation of lies and falsehood, Joseph Goebbels. What he said was, of course, untrue. But though everything he does and says is wrong, in this case his prophecy seems true to me, when he says: "The day will come when the veils which today still cover events, will be lifted. This will be the day of awakening for all the countries of Europe."

"Today we can lift only a corner of that veil. That is what I do when I quote the lines of Friedrich Hölderlin, which I quoted once before, on September 12th, 1943, at the founding of the League of German Officers. Apparently our newspaper, *Free*

Germany, failed to understand their true significance, for they omitted the quotation from their report of the proceedings:

*Heralds of victory arise,
Ours is the triumph!
O Fatherland live on!
And do not weep!
For love of thee—
Not one too many fell.*

'And as Faust says: "All that passes is but a likeness." Now let us think of the fallen, and let us include in our thoughts the fallen of all those lands which today are our enemies and tomorrow will be our friends.' (And here the pianist played *Ich hatt' einen Kamerad*.)

Then Seydlitz reviewed the situation. He touched on the events such as the changed situation at the front, the attempt on Hitler's life, and the executions which followed. He had no comments to make. Or was this his comment? . . . 'And now allow me to conclude by quoting some of Germany's great men of spirit and culture who have said things which will remain true for ever. To this I will append one sentence by Hitler. From Frederick the Great's memoirs, 1781: "Those who imagine that they can direct events, are nearly always mistaken and will find that their plans will fail." Goethe, in *Fact and Fancy*: "My child, my child, go no further! As if whipped on by invisible ghosts, the horses of the sun of time bolt with the light chariot of our fate, and nothing remains for us but to hold the reins bravely and keep the wheels from falling off to either side." Eleven years after the victory of Napoleon, Kaiser William the Great, who was then Prince William, declared that nothing but the memory had remained of the wars of liberation. "If the Nation had realised this as early as 1813, who would have sacrificed everything at the time for such a result?" And Adolf Hitler: "The German has no idea to what degree the people must be deceived, if the support of the masses is to be won." We reply with what Goethe said in one of his works: "God is for everyone. Not for East or West, not for South or North."

'The conclusions which I have just drawn are conclusions of sober and clear reason. But if we look at the past with understanding and feeling, we must declare that the pact which Joseph Stalin concluded with Adolf Hitler on August 21st, 1939, was a pact signed in a spirit of deceit, dishonour, slavery, tyranny, dishonesty, faithlessness and devoid of peaceful and freedom-loving intentions—a pact signed with the devil. Whereas the agreements signed by Marshal Stalin on the 12th and 13th July, 1943, and on the 11th and 12th September, 1943, with the National "Free Germany" Committee and the League of German Officers were agreements signed in a spirit of honesty, honour, faith, freedom and peace! They were agreements signed with God!'

How I managed to sit through this speech I do not know. I should have liked to hide under the table. Most of the others left the hall as they could not restrain their laughter any longer. And yet it was no laughing matter.

With expressionless faces the Russians sat through it all. Paulus declared sarcastically that even the 'Chatter-parliament' in Frankfurt had been a scientific gathering compared with this.

Seydlitz handed the manuscript of his speech to the radio editors. He asked for it to be broadcast to Germany. That is why I am able to reproduce it verbatim.

After looking at the newly arrived generals from the central front, it was clear why the men of the July 20th *putsch* had been left in the lurch. Immediately after their capture they had signed Red Army leaflets at the front and in the Lubianka prison, but when they were asked to sign an appeal in the name of the National Committee, they suddenly got cold feet and thought they detected 'treason'. Here in the headquarters of the National Committee all their fears of being shot in the back and their uncertainty at the front and in prison were forgotten.

One of the generals declared: 'My signature is valueless. It was extracted from me in prison at the point of a gun.'

Homann shouted: 'You are lying! And even if you were telling the truth, it would be more honourable to yourself to keep silent. You are merely putting on record that you are a traitor.'

The general took this reprimand without batting an eye. A divisional commander declared that he had never even heard of the National Committee. And yet we were in possession of a long divisional order which carried his signature, and in which he made a more violent attack on the Committee even than those of the official propaganda. It was clear from this order that he was well informed concerning our aims and that he believed in our existence. When we confronted him with this, he denied his own signature.

Only two Bavarian staff generals stood out among these unimposing figures: Edmund Hoffmeister and Vincent Mueller. Hoffmeister had been in the Soviet Union for six years as liaison officer of the Reichswehr. He had immediately begun a hunger strike in Liubianka prison with the result that the next day he was moved to a comfortable country house. Vincent Mueller was once General Schleicher's adjutant. He was considered one of the most capable staff generals. When he was taken prisoner on the central front, he had asked the Russians for permission to broadcast an order to his scattered units telling them to stop all further senseless resistance in the Bielo-Russian forests, which were overrun with partisans. He was therefore the first general who granted his troops the same explicit right which he had made use of himself. In an excellent survey of the situation both before and after the Russian offensive, these two generals replied to Hitler's terrible accusation that the collapse of the central front was due to the 'treason' of the Army command.

Finally, it was Mueller and Hoffmeister who succeeded in getting the generals to sign another appeal of the Committee's. They both had political experience: Hoffmeister during the days of the Free Corps and the Kapp Putsch, and later as one of the organisers of illegal German rearmament in the Soviet Union; Mueller as adjutant to Schleicher. They were both very active and were soon likely to have the other generals in their pockets.

Hoffmeister had already declared to the Russians at the front: 'I put myself at the disposal of the National Committee and the Russian General Staff. You should march to the Bay of Biscay, Germany and Russia together. That would mean world domina-

tion!' But on 1st May, 1944, when still on the German side, he had declared in a speech: 'The Red Flag flies today from the Bay of Biscay to the Pacific Ocean with only one difference: here the flag has on it the Swastika, the sign of national renaissance, and there the Soviet star—the sign of Jewish internationalism.'

The fact that he told all this himself and laughed about it made him seem quite sympathetic. He liked to baffle his partners in conversation by making paradoxes and cynical remarks. In the Reichswehr he had been well known for his disrespectful, witty and pertinent replies.

On the afternoon of the 22nd August, a lorry arrived with the prisoners' orchestra from Camp 27. They played on the landing pier of the River Klyasma, where the younger officers and other ranks were swimming. The generals and the Communist refugees went for walks in the garden and posed in little groups for the photographers. Later they went down to the lawn to mix with the men. Pieck, in a dark suit, instead of the high-necked tunic cut like Stalin's uniform he normally wore, stood with his hands on his stomach, a complacent smile on his face. It was just like one of those summer excursions organised by some local thrift club. There was no sign of class war in this summer idyll. Men from the right and the left were joined in happy unison: Pieck, Herr Steinkeller, Commander of the Feldherrnhalle Division, S.S. Storm-Leader Meier, the university lecturer Rücker, Helmschrott, the son of a rich farmer, and the left-wing radical Zippel, a supporter of Neumann. The day finished with a party. This had happened several times before. At the request of the political authorities the camp placed a special allotment of food, wine and spirits at the Germans' disposal. The beflowered tables were laden with sandwiches, sweets and cigarettes. The store manager, Comrade Hirsch, kept running up and down the hall and asking our senior officers: 'Do you think there is enough? Will there be enough?' He was much more economical than the Moscow authorities. The reason was that he could sell in the village and the warders' quarters at high black-market prices everything he

held back or saved. The profits went into his pocket. But his special attention was concentrated on the tables laid for the 'high-ups' and the officers of the Committee. Here everything was plentiful, especially the vodka.

At their own parties, on the various political feast days, the Russians always doled out the food according to military rank. The commander received more than his staff officers, the staff officer more than his subordinates, and these again more than the sergeants and other ranks. The latter were, of course, quite happy about this regulation as they gave less of their salaries towards the banquets.

We, of course, did not have to pay. We were the guests of the Russians. This time, Comrade Hirsch had dipped further into his pocket, since the highest authority in the person of the Chief of the War Prisoners' Organisation, General Petroff, and his staff were expected.

As he drove up and rolled into the hall like a little round fat ball we all assembled: the men of the National Committee in their black tank uniforms, mostly captured clothing which the house tailor had altered to look as far as possible like civilian clothes; the new generals in their field grey—still wearing their various distinctions and medals, and Swastikas the size of poached eggs, which we had scrapped long ago. The picture differed little from a gambling party with guests from the S.S. The brown, loose-fitting uniforms of the Russians with their new, large epaulettes were hardly noticeable in this crowd. Only Petroff's adjutant and the Caucasian major, Gagadse, carried on lively and spirited conversations with the generals. An officer from the Baltic States, who had once studied in St. Petersburg, still remembered how, as a prince in an elegant *troika*, he had galloped along the Nevsky-Prospect when the Court nobility had their parties, or when the great Guards parade took place. At the table this one-time prince looked down indignantly on his chief, the one-time illiterate cowherd, as he picked up the potatoes from his plate with the end of his knife and pushed them into his mouth, and, pressing a large piece of meat on to his spoon with his thumb, began to gnaw at it from all sides, smacking his lips.

Before beginning to eat, Petroff downed his vodka in the Russian fashion and proposed the health of Stalin. Skilfully, he combined this toast with an expressed hope that the war would soon be over, and that Europe and all the belligerents of today might again see prosperity in a peaceful world. Thus the new prisoners could empty their glasses without waiting. This form of banquet usually lasted for several hours. It was interrupted by innumerable toasts and speeches and by long intervals between every course, during which there was smoking and drinking. There were toasts to Seydlitz, to Lattmann, to the Soviet Union, to the new community of soldiers and generals, to the fighters against Fascism, to the leader of the German working class, Wilhelm Pieck, to the memory of Florin, to the men of the resistance, and, finally—this was proposed by Bredel—to Paulus, our new colleague. Weinert discovered that he had been in Korfcs' company during the First World War. The deserter and anti militarist Max Emmendörfer was exchanging toasts with Seydlitz.

At this point Seydlitz rose to make a speech. It was with difficulty that he got his imposing, upright figure to its full height. He began by saying that, as a passionate rider, he had never flinched before any obstacle. But today his tongue was loosened, and he was able to take all the fences without difficulty. When he became too tactless and started making cheap jokes, attempting a pun on the Apostles Peter and Paul, with Petroff and Paulus, Petroff tactfully interrupted by proposing three cheers for him. A little puzzled, Seydlitz sank back into his chair, overcome with emotion and drink. The orchestra began to play the Seydlitz march composed by a bandmaster. Weinert, who, owing to a recent illness, was able to carry even less drink than the prisoners who were unused to alcohol, supported himself against a cupboard as he made an attempt to gather his flock together for the bus to Moscow. Petroff disappeared with several chosen generals to continue the celebrations in more intimate surroundings. The more ordinary mortals joined up with the young Russian officers, who, now that their chiefs were out of the way, grew lively and began to sing and dance with all their artistic temperament. We,

too, tried to wash down, with a glass of Crimean wine, the disagreeable taste which Seydlitz' behaviour had left in our mouths, and took part in the celebrations. It was only after a Russian and a German soldier in the full swing of a mazurka banged their heads against a stove so badly that one of them had to be taken away with a large head wound, that the party broke up.

A few days later, there appeared in the newspaper *Free Germany* a statement: 'On the 22nd August, 1944, an important Plenary Session of the National Committee took place, during which, after careful consultations, important decisions were made to intensify the struggle against Fascist tyranny.' Among ourselves these occasions had been called for some considerable time, the 'show pieces'.

CHAPTER VIII

The Collapse

15th February, 1945

'MAY GOD have mercy on us', I wrote eighteen months ago when I had just visualised the possibility that the war might still continue after the Red Army had crossed the German frontiers: East Prussia would be the first victim. But what was happening now surpassed my very worst fears. It would have been impossible to imagine and it now defied description. Yesterday we had a meeting with our sixty members at the front who had advanced with the Rokossovsky Army Group into East Prussia. Sixty distressed, embittered, hate-filled people. They were mostly old Communists who, until recently, were prepared to believe everything bad of the German Army and praise the Red Army to the skies without knowing much about it. They were anti-Fascists who for two years had worked consistently for the National Committee under the most difficult circumstances, without even grumbling about the innumerable humiliations and injustices which they had suffered at the hands of the Red Army officers, and without any hope of recognition from either side for their dangerous work. But these experiences were too much for them. It was indeed too much even for some of the Soviet officers who, under the profound shock, forgot their Party dogma and poured out their hearts to me about their soldiers' orgy of destruction which it seemed impossible to curb. But I must tell the story as it happened.

Our train left Moscow in the direction of Minsk, packed with Soviet soldiers celebrating and drinking vodka in the glow of the fireworks and gunfire salutes that heralded the New Year. Bechler and I were going to Poland as plenipotentiaries to the 2nd Bielo-Russian front, and it was an open secret that we were to go into Germany with the Red Army. Our comrades of the National

Committee were, of course, very envious. Our pockets were full of addresses of relatives with whom we were to get in touch, in bombed towns or prisons and concentration camps. New arrivals amongst the prisoners had informed us that, since 20th July, we had all officially been sentenced to death in our absence and that our relatives had been put under mass arrest. Our joy over our imminent homecoming was overshadowed by the thought that Germany was, after all, suffering the same fate as had befallen Stalingrad, as we had vainly foretold and warned for two years. In our luggage we had ten thousand leaflets, an appeal from Paulus, Seydlitz and fifty other generals to their comrades on the other side to capitulate and spare their Fatherland the worst. But, how many of us still believed in the effectiveness of such an appeal? All we could hope for was to save as many lives as we could out of the chaos of military collapse.

Our journey, like all winter journeys in Russia, became intolerable: hundreds of miles in an open lorry in a temperature of twenty degrees below zero, nights spent in Eastern Polish woods and in deserted villages, attacks by Polish partisans, evenings passed singing and dancing with Russian soldiers over a glass of home-made vodka. Beside me was always the stiff figure of Bechler, who was still mentally wearing his gloves and raspberry-coloured tunic, which he had worn as adjutant to von Knobelsdorff, Commander of the 19th Infantry Regiment in Dresden; he was quite unable to make contact with his fellow travellers, the Russian soldiers and non-commissioned officers, who, though primitive, were often kind and friendly. But he was not a bad fellow and, what was more important, not a N.K.V.D. informer like most of them at the top of the National Committee and the anti-Fascist school, or like the prize Nazis, such as the nephew of 'The Lion of Bresziny' von Stumpf, Colonel Lewes Litzmann and others. 'I shall always do what Moscow says,' Bechler had once told me during a discussion we had about whether criticism of the Party line would be possible within the Communist Party in Germany after the war. 'You are hardly in a position to do anything else,' I snapped back at him, 'but you are crazy if you think

that one can build a new world with a Party of men who merely take orders. How can the Committee in Moscow, or for that matter any Party, conduct a reasonable policy if no opposition and no criticism is allowed to exist within it? The fact that life is a war of contradiction is continually being hammered into us at the anti-Fascist school. The Party becomes a lifeless machine when it no longer has any internal contradictions.'

Bechler had been a battalion commander, respected by his subordinates as well as his comrades, and had supported the official optimism at Stalingrad to the very last day. He was a pedantic man who, according to his own accounts, weighed all the parcels posted by his soldiers to make certain they were not overweight. It was said that he was equally severe with himself. It takes all sorts to make a world. I reminded myself, and, apart from occasional digs at one another, we always got on well together. ⁵

In the middle of January, we arrived at the Narevo front. Our chief, the Tulpanov of this front, was said to be a certain Lieutenant-Colonel Saposhdanski, whom Bechler knew from previous visits. He had already given us glorified accounts of the breakfasts which they had enjoyed together. However, I was unpleasantly surprised to find that the man was a fat, frog-like creature in a brand-new uniform which looked as if it had just come from a shop window.

Our first task was to arrange for a conference with Army divisional instructors from the Politbureau, at which we were to give an account of the political work of the National Committee to eighty officers and members of the Bolshevik Party. Full of expectation and interest we drove to this gathering. Here was an opportunity to do something for German-Russian relations and to get to know the ordinary Soviet citizens. But we were soon disappointed. We were received in icy silence, like enemies; and in this icy silence we spoke of the National Committee and its tasks. Then they let us have it. With unveiled animosity they began to put question after question to us: 'Why do you address us as your comrades? Have you not read Ehrenburg's articles in *Pravda*? Only the unborn children and the dogs in Germany are innocent! . . . So you expect us to support your work? The

work of reactionary generals, who only yesterday were still flogging their slaves? How many Jews have you shot? How many women have you raped?’

We were, however, quite a match for them, and gave these gentlemen a lecture on Marxism and Internationalism which made their provocative questions stick in their throats. But nevertheless this upset our plans. If it was not a planned manœuvre to sound us out, we had better be prepared for a delightful collaboration with the Soviets in Germany. Compared with the political maturity of these eighty men, ‘the advance guard of the working class’, Vansittart and Poincaré were progressive and understanding. But what was the use of all this argument? Events had caught up with us long ago.

On the 14th January the new Russian winter offensive began. We had done nothing from a propaganda point of view to prepare for this offensive; instead, our leaflets, appeals from generals and our newspapers, were used for quite another purpose by the Soviet staff officers. In order to preserve the element of surprise, Rokossovsky had forbidden all forms of propaganda at the front. It was an unnecessary precaution. The Germans knew, without this, that an offensive was imminent, and yet had no possible chance of preparing for it. Lack of petrol, and the Führer’s orders, made it impossible for them to move from their positions, and lack of shells silenced their artillery.

But it made no difference whether our appeals landed in the Russian water closets or the Narev marshes which lay between the fronts; fate took its course in any case.

I followed close behind the advancing Russian troops in a truck which I filled with prisoners. Many times I had to save them at the very last minute from the machine guns of the blood-hungry soldiers.

I saw many groups of men in German uniform who had been mowed down—allegedly men from the Vlassov Army—but not all of them wore the badge of the eastern battalion. Sometimes, near a smallholding or settlement, were scattered five, ten or even twenty disabled Sherman or Russian T.34 tanks. Inside the houses were destroyed anti-aircraft guns or discarded anti-tank guns, a

heap of anti-tank mines and a few dozen dead Germans who had paid dearly for their lives.

We also met a prisoner column, two to three hundred Russians in German uniform surrounded by Red Army men with whips. The prisoners had already been stripped of everything but their shirts. I looked round for a German among them. One man spoke to me in German:

'When are we going to be shot?' he said.

'I hope never,' I said, embarrassed.

The man waved me off with a movement of his hand and pointed at his naked feet in the snow, at his underpants and shirt. 'I hope it will be soon,' he said. 'It is terrible to freeze to death slowly.'

Bechler, myself and five others continued on our journey towards the encircled armies at Thorn. But when we arrived there the German force had already broken out. Rokossovsky's army group, basing its flank on the Vistula, had turned northwards and entered East Prussia. Allenstein and Elbing had already fallen. South-west of the Vistula, Zhukov was advancing towards the Oder, encountering hardly any resistance. Only a few divisions of his army groups had turned north and were marching on the other side of the Vistula towards Danzig. In this way a gap was created between the two army groups in which there were very few Russian units. Nevertheless the position of the encircled Germans seemed hopeless. Between them and the main German front lay the River Vistula and a wide strip of land occupied by the Russians. Graudenz had already been cut off. In a large car with a loudspeaker, and tens of thousands of leaflets and letters from generals, written in their own handwriting, I followed closely behind these encircled German units as they attempted to withdraw and break out westwards. The track along which they were escaping was littered for several dozen miles with dead bodies and destroyed equipment. The German break out was carried out in a manner which, since the break-through at Cherkassy, had become routine: the generals and the commanders, together with tanks and the still mobile heavy arms, got away at the head of the column, while the soldiers in charge of baggage units and the

formations who were dependent on walking were left to their own devices.

But having got as far as the Vistula it looked one night as if the Germans could go no farther. With difficulty I persuaded the Russian group, which had come with me, and their leader, a major who had been decorated with the Order of Lenin, to set up the loudspeaker; they were really only interested in loot and vodka. Three or four times we tried to make contact with the German units, in the hope of being able to cross their lines and negotiate with their leaders. But we only found two field sentries, although we spent hours wandering about the area which was said to be occupied by the Germans.

On the following morning the mystery was cleared up. The previous evening the Germans had found a pontoon bridge which the Russians had thrown across the Vistula and had got to the other side. But at what a price? A flat area of three to four square miles in front of the bridge was covered with the ruins of trucks, cars and arms, with piles of twisted dead bodies among them.

From the high banks of the Vistula the Russian artillery was firing over open sights on the columns as they lined up before crossing the bridge.

I climbed up the dam and looked across the river to the west. Not a living soul was to be seen. Grey puffs of smoke rose from the ruins of houses and trucks burning beneath the low clouds, which seemed to hang just above the dirty snow. The ice began to crack under the bridge. Behind me the Russians, led by their major, were looting among the devastation. It was only when a Russian battery opened fire from the hills above, and with a shrill whine the shells blew up against the overturned trucks, that they abandoned their squalid activity and hastened back to Thorn in order not to miss their share of the booty there.

In the meantime Bechler had remained with Army Headquarters and was occupied in investigating a prisoner-of-war assembly camp. We had no time to exchange views and experiences because as soon as we got back the major, without any

warning, sent my five assistants to a prisoner-of-war camp. He said they had all five behaved in a cowardly manner and worked badly—this was his excuse for doing so. They had made three attempts to cross over the lines. Three times the Red Army had recaptured them. They had been beaten and threatened with shooting, and yet they would have tried it a fourth time had I asked them to. But I had not wanted them to risk their lives again.

The truth was that the major found it inconvenient to have these men as possible witnesses. After innumerable arguments about his lack of discipline, his drunkenness and his quarrels which held up our work, I had finally threatened that I would complain about him.

When all our protests to the major against the handing over of our comrades had failed, I suggested to Bechler that we return at once to the front headquarters, in order to plead for their release with Saposhdanski. Bechler was of the opinion that such action on our own initiative was too strong a protest, and, finally we agreed that I should go off alone while he—so that nobody could make any accusations against us—remained in Thorn with the Army staff to which we were attached.

But Saposhdanski did not receive me till three days after my arrival, by which time Bechler had also returned to the front. His answer to my complaints, which were only mildly supported by Bechler, about the impossibility of working with people only interested in loot was that I had acted without any self-restraint and that I should take an example from Bechler's behaviour. As Bechler said nothing I left the two to breakfast alone.

Even this episode now seemed very unimportant. During the last few days, since my return to the staff at the front, all our colleagues from the divisions in East Prussia had gradually arrived here. They had witnessed the collapse of East Prussia—the storm of the Huns. They had seen how the Russian soldiers burned down towns and villages, had watched them shoot prisoners and civilians, rape women and turn Army hospitals into death houses. They had seen them drink petrol cans and scent bottles dry, plunder, destroy and burn. They had also read the orders of the new occupying power: all men between sixteen and

fifty-five years of age, all members of the Hitler Youth and the National Socialist Girls' League over the age of fourteen, all members of the National Socialist Party or of any of its subsidiary organisations were to report to the Kommandatura with two days' rations, on penalty of death. They had seen the camp into which these people were thrown and from there deported to Russia. They had seen columns of refugees, into which Russian and German artillery had fired simultaneously, then swept into the ditches by Russian tanks.

They had witnessed an orgy of extermination such as no civilised land could ever have experienced before. Only few of them were able to hold back their tears when they spoke of it.

I had always been afraid of the day when the Red Army would start fighting on German soil. But what was happening went further than I had thought possible, even in my most pessimistic hours. The Russian officers even confirmed what our comrades had said. They were no longer in control of their troops. Commanders who tried to order their troops to moderation were simply shot dead.

I heard from Bechler that we had been asked to call a meeting of our sixty workers at the front, in order to talk over with them the events in Eastern Prussia. In silence we walked towards the neighbouring village where the men were billeted, and in silence they gathered round us. Two Russian officers insisted on attending the meeting, although I asked them to leave us alone so that the men should speak quite freely. But perhaps it was better thus. At any rate they would hear for themselves what was said, rather than have it reported by their informers, who were undoubtedly present at this meeting 'practising 'Bolshevik vigilance', as they had done in the National Committee or the anti-Fascist school, and as they did throughout the Soviet Union. This mutual watching and spying was considered to be a duty and taken as a matter of course by every Party member.

Once more our comrades unfolded before us a picture of the inhuman horror which had broken out in East Prussia. Suddenly I remembered that I had heard something like this before. Four weeks ago, when the Russian offensive had just begun, I had

come across a young farmer's son in a prisoner assembly camp. He had been a troop leader in the German youth movement. We were looking for volunteers to be trained in our school at the front, and had just delivered a lecture about our aims and intentions to a group of twenty selected prisoners. After the lecture, we asked each one whether he was willing to join us in our work. With the exception of this boy everybody had agreed to join. His reply was:

'Until a few months ago, I was in the Hitler Youth Movement. Maybe you are right in what you say about the Third Reich and Hitler. Events seem to prove you right. But I cannot change sides from one day to the next. Also, do you really think that the Soviets are so much better? What they have done in the towns and villages which they captured in the autumn, and which we retook, is worse than death. We East Prussians would rather die in battle than suffer such treatment without attempting to defend ourselves.'

This statement, made by a youngster in the presence of Soviet officers, could hardly have been more courageous and frank. But at the time I tried to get over the shock which this report of the behaviour of the Red Army had given me by attempting to convince myself that his words were surely only the result of the usual Nazi propaganda.

Now there was no escaping the truth. We had to face the fact that what the boy had told us had been the truth, though only about a small portion of the entire front. When our comrades had finished their report, Bechler rose and, without having previously discussed it with me, began to make a speech which had obviously been prepared in advance.

'Comrades, the Fascist war of conquest is nearing its end,' he began. 'The Red Army, the most progressive army in the world, the army of Socialism and Internationalism, has arrived on German soil to free the German people from Fascist slavery.'

In this vein he continued for over twenty minutes, until he came to the concluding sentences: 'Comrades, the tone in which you have spoken about the conduct of the Red Army shows that you are still infected through and through with Fascist poison,

and that you at once begin to complain when the Nazi criminals, who have brought this catastrophe on Germany, have to atone for their deeds. It shows that you are prepared to slander the Red Army and to build up, out of a few unavoidable excesses of war, an anti-Soviet campaign. It shows that you still fall into the trap set by the Fascists, if you blame the Red Army for arson and murders committed by the Fascist "werewolves". In the name of the National Committee and the representatives of the Red Army, it is my duty to give you a severe reprimand and warning. I close the meeting.'

Then I rose to speak.

'What instructions Comrade Bechler may have received from the representative of the Red Army I do not know, but I do know that he is not speaking in the name of the National Committee. I have something to tell you which is the exact contrary of what you have just heard. First of all I want to thank you in the name of the National Committee for all the care and trouble and conflicts of conscience which you have taken upon yourselves for the sake of the future of our Fatherland: and all this—as we see now—without any hope of recognition or understanding from either side. I must tell you that I am, like you, deeply shocked by what has happened in the past few days in our country. I must remind you that many of you violently attacked me at the anti-Fascist school when I voiced my opinion that the Red Army should not be regarded as the incarnation of all human and soldierly virtues, but that it was an Army whose soldiers were in the majority uncivilised, brutal, primitive peasants who often waged the kind of war which, in other countries, was usual in the times of the Thirty Years' War. If we refuse to admit these facts, if we forget that, thirty years ago, eighty per cent of the population of the Soviet Union was still illiterate, that since World War I the Soviet population has not in practice known a normal and peaceful life, but only civil war, hunger, political disorder and a complete revolution in every aspect of life—which has not contributed to a stable conception of justice and humanity—we shall always have a false opinion of the Soviet Union. The grotesque attempt to make out that the disaster which has befallen East Prussia is an anti-

Soviet invention only goes to show to what really imbecile political attitudes such a lack of objectivity can lead.' Having said this I tried to find an explanation for the behaviour of the Red Army: the brutalisation of war, the pent-up hatred during the advance of two thousand miles through their own ravaged country, the desperate, obstinate resistance of the German troops, who were still inflicting heavy losses on the Red Army, the necessity for intensifying hate-propaganda at a moment when the war-weary Soviet soldiers had pushed the enemy out of their country and had now to face further, more difficult battles, and, finally, the rage these soldiers must have experienced when they realised that we had ravaged their country, while in our land there existed a standard of living which to them must have seemed the height of luxury. I finished my speech with these words: 'Hitler has sown an abundance of hate. It is not surprising that, while from a military point of view senseless resistance continues on German soil, we reap hatred from a people which is fundamentally good natured and not aggressive, but which has not yet learned to control sudden emotional outbursts. We have often seen how they can change equally suddenly from kindness and sympathy to brutality and ruthlessness, and vice versa. If Bechler meant to point out in his speech that since we started the war it was up to us to suppress the anger and sorrow which we feel at the injustice which is now being done, that it was up to us to overcome the feelings of hatred and revenge and blot out the past, I agree with him on this point, but on this only.'

My speech was not followed by a discussion. But, a little furtively, one comrade after another came up to me and thanked me for my reply to Bechler. Even one of the Soviet officers shook me by the hand and said: 'You have spoken after my own heart. What Bechler said was quite incredible.'

'He undoubtedly had instructions from your chief,' I replied. The Russian shrugged his shoulders in a resigned fashion. 'Of course, I know.' That evening I was told that a telegram had been received, ordering my return to Moscow. I suspected that the gentlemen of the staff at the front disliked my presence there!

25th February, 1945

I was still with the staff at the front. The Russians had not yet found means to send me and the other anti-Fascists, who had become undesirable, to Moscow. In the meantime, Bechler and Saposhdanski had started a propaganda campaign directed at the encircled German units in Graudenz. They had left for Graudenz with twenty comrades from our front school. This expedition had again not been properly planned. There was a shortage of uniforms, arms and passes. Nobody knew anything about the encircled units, their position at the front, the position of the minefields, or about their commanders. Our people had no chance of getting safely through the lines and would certainly fall immediately into the hands of the secret field police with the encircled armies. But Bechler had chosen to ignore all my warnings. In an utterly senseless way the lives of our people were being risked simply in order that Saposhdanski could send proof of his 'activity' to Moscow.

Four survivors returned from Graudenz. Our people had made five attempts to cross the lines towards the encircled units; but as they had not even been shown a map, as they had no idea of the position of the front, or of the attitude of the Germans, or of the position of the minefields, most of them had been killed or severely wounded in the attempt. Only one group of four men, under the leadership of a lieutenant from Bregenz, had succeeded in making contact with the encircled troops. This lieutenant had with him letters from Seydlitz addressed to the commanders of the German units. But on the following day we learned, from the new arrivals among the prisoners, that this lieutenant, together with his comrades, had been handed over to the S.S. for execution without having even seen the commanders. The four survivors were sent by the Russians to a prison camp as traitors and cowards.

I had one other sharp encounter with the Russians. I taxed the head of our school at the front with the whole affair and he accused me of having demoralised the men by advising them not to take part in this senseless commando expedition.

'We could equally well have ordered the anti-Fascists to take the commander at Graudenz prisoner,' he mocked. 'In that case you might just as well have had the men shot here,' I replied. 'What you are doing is murder, senseless murder, and I shall accuse you of this in Moscow.' Without saluting, I left the room. The same young Russian lieutenant who had already shown me his sympathy on previous occasions followed me and tried to calm me. 'If the Red Army had fought as badly as the political division appears to work, we should have lost the war long ago,' he said. 'And here they seem to do their work particularly badly.' I told him that I would do all in my power to see that my complaint would bring about Saposhdanski's removal, especially as Bechler had promised to support my complaint with a written report. The lieutenant was sceptical.

'I would advise you to be careful. General Burzeff, Saposhdanski's chief in Moscow, was here recently. He went from one party to another. The two of them are close friends. You won't do much with him.'

3rd March, 1945

The return journey to Moscow took five days. The sixteen men who had helped us at the front nearly collapsed under the weight of the booty and loot which the two Russian officers who accompanied us had collected for themselves and for their comrades in Moscow: tins of meat, butter, rolls of material, tablecloths, dresses, stockings, tools, watches and jewellery.

In Moscow, we were asked to deliver the loot to their various relations, and in this way we had an opportunity to see inside the houses of these Russians. One of the officers was an elementary school teacher in civilian life. He lived with his mother, his wife, his sister and her daughter in a dreary room, no more than fifteen feet square, which was filled with broken furniture and dusty plants in pots. How these five people managed with two beds and a dilapidated sofa was a puzzle to me. The lieutenant explained it to me as if it were the most usual thing in the world: they slept in shifts. There were ten doors leading off the

landing on to which this room opened, and behind each door lived a family, often consisting of three generations. The lieutenant and I had a meal with one of the neighbours. The room was about half the size of an ordinary Berlin bedroom and had been turned into a workshop, with a lathe in the centre of the room and metal scraps all over the floor. Two metal workers lived here and they too slept in shifts on the floor, upon a pile of old rags. I asked our host what his food ration was, as I had noticed the delight with which he opened the tins of meat which the lieutenant had contributed towards our meal. They were exactly the same rations as those at the officers' camps. I could not make this out. The man looked quite well nourished. But even if one took into account the moderation of the Russians, he could not possibly exist on such food while working twelve-hour shifts. Our host pointed to the turning lathe, and the pile of old rags which served as a bed in the corner of the room.

'We also work privately for ourselves. We have sold everything we could do without, even our bed, in order to be able to buy on the black market,' he said.

'Isn't that dangerous?' I asked, remembering the struggle against speculators and black marketeers which *Pravda* was eternally announcing. He made a disparaging movement with his hand: 'One must live. And as long as the gentlemen at the top buy on the black market, without which they also would starve, nothing much can happen to us.'

The lieutenant was rather embarrassed by this conversation. As an officer and Party member, he had never talked to me about these things. Now he tried to interrupt us.

'Better not talk like this,' he said in Russian. 'He is a German.'

'My friend,' our host replied, 'what difference does it make? He is a German and I am a Muscovite. Misery is the same everywhere.' I had not realised that things were quite so bad in Moscow. Yet in *Pravda* it was stated that in East Prussia the working-men's flats were all furnished with furniture stolen from the Soviet Union.

At last we reached our objective, the Moscow office of the Committee. But the reception which awaited us was indeed un-

expected. We were locked in a cellar! At first I thought that this was only a bureaucratic measure, as permission for the journey to Moscow and to stay in the city even for a few hours was difficult to obtain. But eventually our arrival was announced to the *Kommandantur*, and we were given our delousing certificates. There could be no further obstacle to our being received by Weinert. The hours passed. Nobody bothered about us. At last, in spite of all orders to the contrary, and the curses of the guard, I pushed my way out of the cellar and tried to get into the office of the National Committee. The cries of the guard fetched the military sentries, who were watching the house, and they tried to push me back into the cellar by force. Members of the National Committee rushed out, very excited, and tried to persuade me to have patience. I did not stop shouting and struggling with the guards until I was eventually standing before Weinert. In a great rage I gave him a short account of our experiences at the front, and told him of all our complaints.

'You *must* talk to our colleagues from the front. They are completely disillusioned at the arbitrary and unjust manner in which their endless work is rewarded. The Committee has accepted responsibility for these people, and cannot simply let them down just because a corrupt lieutenant wants to be rid of them.'

Weinert promised everything. First, I was to talk to General Burzeff. A table was laden with caviar, vodka, lobster, white bread and cold meat, in short, with everything which is included in a real Russian *Sakuska* or *hors-d'œuvre*. Then the general appeared with his adjutant, the son of the well-known draughtsman, Heinrich Vogler, who had died of starvation after being expelled to Central Asia.

'You have had difficulties?' asked the general.

He was a most rude fellow, whose double chins bulged over the collar of his uniform. He had originally been a glass blower, Weinert told me with a certain amount of pride, to prove that it was possible to rise in the social scale in the Soviet Union.

'I am sure you will agree, General,' I answered, 'that the work on the Second Byelo-Russian front has brought nothing but failure.'

'I am not referring to the front, I am alluding to your difficulties here in this building,' interrupted the general.

'Yes, that is so, too. For hours they shut us up in the cellar, and that was only the end of a long series of humiliations, injustices and unjustified reproaches to which my comrades and I have been exposed. I hope to be able to give you a full report on all this, and I would like to point out that it does not only concern ourselves, but also the work that we should be doing and that Bechler and the other comrades are still trying to do.'

The general interrupted me again: 'Have a drink and some food; you have had a tiring journey.'

'I have waited so long, sir, that I can wait for my food a little longer. I must, General . . .'

'Well later on, after you have eaten. You should recover first.' With those words I was silenced and we began to eat. And then suddenly, in the middle of the meal, as the conversation came round again to conditions at the front, the general took leave of us.

'I have work to do; we shall continue the conversation later.'

Before this sentence had even been translated to me, the Russian general left the room.

'What is all this comedy about?' I asked Weinert. 'Why didn't you support me in my argument with the general? You know perfectly well that things are just as I described them to you, or is it unpleasant for you to hear the truth about what is happening at the front and in Germany? Is it distasteful to you when I tell you that the first success at the front occurred only after eighteen months, and a few weeks before the end of the war? Why don't you talk with the workers at the front? If you don't believe me, they will tell you things which will make my report look like an outline.'

Weinert listened to all this with an implacable expression.

'The front workers have already been sent away,' he said. 'Their report shows clearly that it is not merely a question of a demoralised, but of a definitely hostile element. As far as your report is concerned Bechler is saying just the opposite.' He showed me the last number of the newspaper, *Free Germany*, which had a large picture of Bechler in conversation with the commandant

of the fortress, General Fricke, after he had been taken prisoner and a whole page of a report of his successes in Graudenz. I put the paper aside. 'Good, that is, for the newspaper. The behaviour of the German generals is well known to us. But where is Bechler's report? I am speaking here in his name, too. My complaints are his complaints. We decided that, and he expressly asked me to support him against Saposhdanski.'

'Such a report does not exist,' answered Weinert.

'Then it must have been held back by Saposhdanski, just as our earlier reports were,' I said.

'By no means,' said Weinert, 'there is in existence a report on your attitude towards the behaviour of the Red Army, and from this report it is easy to see that you were not up to the job.'

'One man's viewpoint is nothing. Both sides must be heard, Comrade Weinert. If this elementary principle is not respected, then I could have saved myself a lot of trouble.'

'Well, we have heard you now,' said Weinert, closing the conversation. 'The report on you was in no way exaggerated.'

26th March, 1945

For nearly a week I was held prisoner in the office of the National Committee. There was much talk of what would happen to me. Finally I came back to Lunovo.

After this I naturally became somewhat more prudent in my reports, but the fact that I had made the sole statement that in Germany things had happened which would unfortunately leave an irreparable breach for many years between Germany and Russia, was sufficient to make me suspected of disparaging the reputation of the Red Army and of being hostile to the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER IX

The Dissolution of the National Committee

9th May, 1946

A YEAR had passed since the end of the war. How much I had longed for the last day of fighting, and how great was the disillusionment which it brought. Nothing for which we had striven had been accomplished. The Third Reich had collapsed in the very circumstances which we had attempted to avoid; and even that did not mean our return home.

The National Committee vegetated for the whole of the summer of 1945. In June, the first members, Reyher and Willms, were allowed to go back to Germany. A little later a large number of the Communist émigrés followed, and with them all those who, like Bechler, were ready to carry out Moscow's orders unconditionally—or, to be more precise, were ready to carry out unconditionally what Moscow appeared to order. For, in fact, it was much more difficult to interpret the oracle-like pronouncements of the official Party line in respect of post-war problems than it had been in the theoretical lectures given in the anti-Fascist school. What was yesterday's Party line could today be a deviation, and vice versa. In this way, the official point of view on the question of the federalisation of Germany, the level of steel production, the eastern frontier, demobilisation or reparations, was changed three or even four times. Only those who could accept these changes without question as the truth could be considered true disciples of Bolshevism.

This situation reached its climax over the question of the Oder-Neisse Line. Even though I tried ten times a day to believe that this policy held a certain fidelity to the principles of internationalism, of the right to racial self-determination and of under-

standing between peoples, I could not accept with my emotions what I managed to believe with my mind.

But let me leave my feelings out of it. Dialectical reasoning prevailed. It is a traditional principle of Communism that national questions must be subordinated to the social revolution. To a convinced revolutionary, the claims of nationalism must take second place if the strategy and tactics of the international class war require them to do so.

If one started with the premise that the Soviet Union was the first and only Socialist State in the world, was in fact the backbone of the revolutionary movement, and that the existence and success of the latter depend on the existence and the power of the former, then as a German Communist it was necessary to subordinate the interests of one's own nation even on the question of the German-Polish frontier.

The annexation of the three Eastern German provinces by Poland, or alternatively their deliverance to Poland by the Great Powers, naturally decided the struggle between East and West for influence in Poland in favour of the Soviet Union. The London Poles thought they could undermine the claim of the Polish Communists to be the exclusive founders of a Greater Poland, with the Oder as frontier, by making these demands their own. In this they received the support of the British who hoped thereby to prevent the transformation of Poland into a People's Democracy that would be a mere satellite of Moscow; but it was clear that the point was missed in London that Poland, having once accepted these provinces, would be bound to follow Moscow's policy. How could Poland defend her new frontiers against future German revisionist claims if she was not supported by the Soviet Union? The incidents of September 1939 showed the true value of a western guarantee to an anti-Soviet Poland opposed by a hostile Germany.

For the Soviet Union, this gift to Poland was specially valuable because it was only in this way that the bitterness and deep-rooted hostility of the Polish people towards Russia could be lessened—a hostility that was, of course, heightened by the Soviet attitude towards the eastern frontiers of Poland. Poland's gain meant not

only security for the Soviet Union on its western frontier, but also guaranteed its continued influence in all occupied territories after the withdrawal of the occupation troops.

The German Communists found themselves now in a similar situation to that of the Polish Communists in 1939, when the Soviet Union participated in the destruction of Pilsudski's Poland. Just as Poland did then, Germany now found herself between two fires. In both cases the Soviet Union was the winner. Communists of both countries could, with a certain justification, wash their hands of any responsibility, because they had always fought against those expansionist tendencies which were coloured by anti-Soviet feelings, and which, in both cases, brought the same fatal result.

This whole Communist structure received a severe blow when it became known that more than twelve million Germans were to be driven from the new provinces of Poland and out of other Eastern European countries. Who would have thought in his wildest dreams that the Soviet Union would assume the guilt for such a violation of the rights of national minorities established over centuries, when it had here an opportunity for giving the world an example of the Socialist approach to this problem, which would have won it credit for a spirit of true internationalism? This unparalleled expulsion of millions of persons was bound to push Germany and the whole of Europe into a fatal hostility towards Communism and the Soviet Union. But here again the Moscow Communists had an explanation ready, which was not, in fact, entirely flattering to the Soviet Union, but had, however, some real foundation; one of the reasons why the Soviet Union was not overrun long before the war by its capitalist neighbours lay in the contradictions and conflicts which prevented the non-Socialists from taking any united action to solve the social disagreements existing within and between them. Lenin's whole conception of the possibility of the victory of Socialism in one land rests on a skilful exploitation of these contradictions in the capitalist world. After the war, one of the most important of these conflicts disappeared with the defeat of the Axis and of Japan. Moreover, a new and power-

ful link had appeared which held the capitalist world together, namely the undisputed control of the world market by the dollar, and the overwhelming authority of the U.S.A. Meanwhile, it would take years before the Soviet Union could recover from the enormous sacrifices in blood and destruction of the war. Even longer would be the period before the Soviet Union could catch up with the technical and scientific advances of the West. The Soviet Union, therefore, had every reason to be moderate in its policy, and to make sure that Poland and the Balkan States would follow a line which was co-ordinated with her own, without being disturbed by foreign influences; she could not yet gamble on the vague hope that the Communists would come to power in Germany, for first there would have to be a long and difficult political fight. She would also have to take into account that the annexations, and the ensuing expulsions of the German peoples would make Communism very unpopular in Germany. But, taking the long view, both these measures would bring about in Germany such a conflict between the need for import trade and the possibilities of export, such an intensification of unemployment and foreign trade deficits, that these problems could eventually no longer be solved by bourgeois democratic methods. Unavoidable misery amongst the masses would prepare the ground for Communist agitation, and even the middle classes and big capitalists would eventually be compelled to seek their salvation in a policy based on a retention of their eastern markets and on a planned economy—in short, a policy which would be friendly to Moscow.

This strategy is so coldly cynical that one shrinks from recognising it, but it is impossible to deny its logic and farsightedness. Sentimental revolutionaries should never try to put their ideas into practice. If one believes in the Soviet experiment and in Communism one must have the courage to recognise its consequences. That is the root of the matter. The officially given reason for the policy of the Oder-Neisse Line is Molotov's declaration that the three Eastern German Provinces are the 'cradle of the Polish State', which the magnanimous Soviet Union first reconquered from the German aggressors and then gave back to

their rightful owners. In all the Soviet newspapers, and naturally in *Free Germany*, history was distorted in page-long articles in order to give a 'scientific' foundation to this story.

Even Ulbricht, who was nevertheless a very skilled politician, dealt with this question by stating, crudely: 'Hitler gambled away the East German Provinces.' In the National Committee we had to agree with the most extreme distortions of history that the Polish Chauvinists and fanatical Pan-Slavs could produce.

We were supposed to believe that a policy which violated in the crudest manner the principles of national self-determination was, in the last resort, faithful to the principles of nationalism. At the same time we were supposed to defend it with the most shameless nationalistic and racial slogans and arguments, based on the most extreme falsifications of history. Just as we had managed, with considerable effort, to accept the first arguments, so we were suddenly obliged to subscribe unconditionally and fanatically to the second articles of faith if we did not want to be suspected of nationalistic deviations and Fascist hair-splitting. The Communists, such as Zippel, Emmendorfer, Grandy and Klement, made it their business to incite the others to protest against these ridiculous articles so that they could immediately report their protests to the N.K.V.D. Grandy, a former N.C.O. in the *Lüftwaffe*, who had become an editor of the Central Publications of the Communist Party in Germany, left behind a notebook, either by mistake or in a spirit of cynical contempt, when he was repatriated to Germany at the beginning of August 1945; in this his comrades discovered an accurate report of all such heretical statements. In such an atmosphere the last traces of solidarity within the National Committee disappeared. The statement of Ulbricht that only anti-Fascists would be repatriated as there were already enough Fascists in Germany, let loose, in the 'middle of the summer, what we called 'the battle for return tickets'. Everybody understood only too well that anyone who allowed himself his own opinions was considered a Fascist.

In the first months after my return from Narev I was too depressed to let myself think about the criticisms which had been

levelled against me. It was only gradually that I realised that these reproaches were not simply designed to make me keep my mouth shut about my special experiences at the front, but also indicated that I had really fallen into disgrace. The Party judged me to be politically unreliable and demoralised. I lived in a suffocating atmosphere. With a few exceptions, my comrades from the Left Wing of the Committee—the more-or-less Communist element with which I had always been closely associated—were quick to break their personal ties with me.

The inner ring of this Communist element was formed by the triumvirate, Homann, Vincent Müller and Arno von Lensky. The latter two, both generals, had visited the anti-Fascist school in the winter of 1944 and had returned to Lunovo convinced Communists. Hoffmeister could not go along with them because his health had grown much worse. And that winter a stroke finally put him out of action.

Müller had aligned himself with the Communist way of thinking with a speed which astonished even those of us who had personally experienced the attraction such theories could have on people who, by their origin and education, should have been on the other side of the barricade.

Müller had been considered one of the most capable general staff officers of the Wehrmacht. Physically he somewhat resembled Vlassov. He could be polite and smooth as well as energetic and decided. He was a Catholic, and as a former adjutant of General Schleicher had supervised the overthrow of the Prussian Social Democratic régime in Wehrkreis III on July 20th, 1932. Apart from Hoffmeister, he was the only general in imprisonment who had had any political experience. It was the kind of experience in the Reichswehr Party which his friend Hoffmeister had condemned so sharply in his articles on the grounds that it simultaneously produced utterly Machiavellian conceptions and a complete lack of foresight and energy, characteristic of the school of General von Seeckt. Müller knew, just as Hoffmeister did, that the successes which the Reichswehr Party had celebrated behind the scenes during the Weimar Republic were inevitably linked with the military and political activities carried on by the former officers

of the Kaiser's Army in their dealings with the leaders of the Red Army on the Soviet training grounds, the aerodromes of the Red Air Force and in the arms factories of Kharkov and Tula. He fully recognised the duality of this policy and its lack of any solid ideological basis amongst the masses which, in the end, after the last attempt of Schleicher to revive the *mariage de convenance* concluded in 1919 between the trade unions and the military caste, had resulted in capitulation before Hitler's demagogic triumphs. For this reason it was not surprising that in the present catastrophe Müller regarded a renewal of the pro-Russian policy of the Reichswehr, this time reinforced with a Communist mass movement, as Germany's only political hope.

The most simple and straightforward of this triumvirate was Arno von Lensky. He embodied the tradition of the Prussian cavalry officer, both by origin and in his career. This elegant and chivalrous sportsman, whose greying head would have looked well beneath the three-cornered hat of the era of Frederick the Great, had been taken prisoner at Stalingrad as commander of the 24th Panzer Division, a division labelled as a reactionary force by the Nazis since its officers had been recruited from the old noble families. He had come over to the Committee early in 1944. He was able to give honourable reasons to justify his action. But he found no support amongst his former subordinates in the officers' camp at Yelabuga.

It is possible that the influence of his A.D.C., Jesco von Puttkamer, was just as important to his decision as the fact that the Russians apparently experimented with him by treating him in a most skilful and correct manner, separating him from the other generals and lodging him for several weeks in a luxurious country house. The hope that Germany would arise in an alliance with the Soviet Union brought him into our camp. Another motive for his behaviour was his feeling of guilt in that he belonged to a class which had regarded military and political social leadership as its special privilege, but which had clearly failed to live up to its obligations.

Another group was that of the 'Christian Socialists', under

the leadership of Martin Lattmann. Korfes, Steidle, von Frankenberg, van Hooven and Dr Czimatis belonged to this. Lewes Litzmann also claimed to be a Christian Socialist. At every opportunity they loved to call themselves non-Marxists or anti-Marxists in order to be able to conform even more closely with the Communists. Lattmann clearly hoped, as a non-Marxist, to be of more use to the Russians than the Marxists; and this hope often led him to change his position and to contradict himself frequently. An astounding dishonesty to themselves was a special characteristic of this group. They were generally called the 'india-rubber men', because it was clear to everybody how, in all political discussions, they moved from side to side under the pressure of Communist demands. The evangelical clergymen could also be considered as belonging to this group, although as clergymen they were in a special position and, moreover, all four were sent back to Germany during 1945. The Catholic priests, on the contrary, were the only ones who in all tactical compromises were able to say 'no' when anything was demanded of them which contradicted their Catholic principles.

There were also a few men who had leanings towards Social Democracy. Amongst these were Captain Fleischer and his friends, and also, with some reservations, Major Hetz. They had to be even more prudent than the regular Communists, for to be a Social Democrat, and therefore against the unity of the working classes, was to be guilty of the most appalling heresy, even if it only happened in theory, as was the case here.

Why the National Committee was not immediately disbanded after the 9th May we never found out. It was now completely pointless. But apparently the Soviets wanted to hold it in reserve as long as they were unsure whether the Western Powers might not agree to the formation of a German Government. From week to week, and from month to month, Pieck and Weinert promised that we would be sent home in the very near future, with the exception of the generals whose repatriation was, for the present, impossible for reasons of foreign policy. When even the Potsdam Conference which, in theory, governed the dates of our return, brought no change in our situation, and the messages over the

radio and in the newspapers became more and more meaningless (as we had no contact either with the prisoner-of-war camps or with Germany), six of us made a last attempt to re-establish solidarity and to obtain from the Soviets a clarification of our position by means of a combined approach. We sent a request to Weinert asking for the convocation of a plenary session in which we hoped to learn the intentions of the Soviet Government towards the National Committee. Moreover, we demanded that the Committee should discuss the proposals and demands which would be addressed to the Russians in the event of the National Committee being kept alive for a further period.

We proposed the following agenda:

(a) Explanation by the President of the political situation in Germany and the intentions of the Russians towards the National Committee (if necessary by some suitable expert).

(b) A statement of the political situation in Germany in relation to the possibilities of political activity by the National Committee.

(c) The establishment of a clear attitude towards the programme of a united front in Germany and the programmes of the various parties. Clarification of the question whether members of the National Committee would be free to join the different parties and whether publicity could be given to their Party membership.

(d) Clarification of the question of the provision of working material from Germany and from the prisoner-of-war camps for political activity. Discussion of an urgent request concerning the possibility of being brought into contact with life in the Soviet Union (which we had been promised hundreds of times would take place after the war).

(e) Discussion of the composition of the National Committee and the admittance of new working members. In this context it would be necessary to clarify:

- (i) Whether the members of the National Committee who had been transported to different prisoner-of-war camps for other purposes could not be brought back to Lunovo to bring the Committee up to strength.

- (ii) What were the actual relations and connections between the National Committee and those members who had been sent to Germany, and how these could be made closer.
- (iii) Whether it was possible to take up the work of ideological publications (in the same way as the Education Committee) by using suitable collaborators from the camps and from civil life.

This manifesto appeared at a time when we were more actively concerned with our specific tasks and were more conscious of our responsibilities towards the individual members of our movement. The proposers were of the opinion that the decisions of the competent Russian authorities would not be achieved through a plenary session, but that these authorities would appreciate a clarification of the German attitude towards the open questions. Such a clarification would facilitate their taking up a definite attitude towards the National Committee, or perhaps its legal successor. It was signed: Graf Einsiedel, Fleischer, Gerlach, Hetz, Kaiser, Steidle.

In the last resort it was a question of a clear and uncompromising decision: either the disbandment of the Committee with a guarantee of the repatriation of its members and collaborators (whose names would have to be published with the decision to dissolve the Committee), or a definition of its rights and duties as the official representative of prisoners of war in the Soviet Union. But we did well to formulate these intentions in a prudent fashion. The proposers were easily able to obtain the signature of Kaiser as a representative of the Catholic priests and of Steidle who, despite his somewhat fantastic character, could always be relied on for his honesty and civic courage. But when we approached Pastor Schröder, as the representative of the Evangelical Pastors, with a request that he put his name to the 'manifesto' he literally turned pale with fright. Trembling and stammering with excitement he left the room and ran to find Major Homann to ask his advice as to how best to dissociate himself from our action. He was afraid that he might be suspended, if only for the reason that we had considered it possible

that he might agree to sign such a manifesto. A few minutes after this conversation with Homann, the rumour began of a new 'Huber affair', a new attempt to split the Committee and to force the Soviet Union into a complicated foreign political situation. This naturally brought our position into the open. If the Russians had taken up this indirect denunciation we might very well have been caught. It was fortunate that we initiated Schröder only the day before one of our regular sessions of the National Committee, with the result that we were able to protest to Weinert against these insinuations and could produce our written manifesto before the political officer, or Weinert himself, could receive instructions from Moscow as to how to act in the business. The result was that there was nothing else for Weinert to do but to welcome our manifesto as 'the long-hoped-for democratic gesture from the members of the Committee', and to approve the convening of a plenary session of the Committee. This session was, in fact, postponed from week to week.

Early in November Weinert suddenly appeared in the House, and approached me with outstretched arms, saying: 'Heinrich, in three days you will be home, and the National Committee will be dissolved.' This clumsy manœuvre was sufficient to nip in the bud any discussion concerning the conditions for the dissolution of the National Committee. No single individual, nor even a minority, had the courage to demand or to open such a discussion. The possibility that there might be something in Weinert's promise that we should return home in three days undermined the courage of the majority lest they risk their own individual chances through untimely opposition. The result of this was that the National Committee was unanimously dissolved and its members delivered themselves and all their supporters in the camps—which were practically all the prisoners—voluntarily and unconditionally into the hands of the Russians.

It was not difficult for the six signatories of the 'manifesto' to

realise why Weinert had purposely put his proposal for the dissolution of the Committee to the vote.

Night after night the members and collaborators of the Committee were pulled out of their beds by the N.K.V.D. and, if they were on the list of suspects, were examined closely as to their suitability for repatriation. Even people like Homann, who, in the summer, had let Ulbricht know that he would expect a high price to be paid for his political collaboration in the Soviet Zone of Occupation, became more and more nervous.

The tension reached its climax when I was called one day before Commissar Savelyev who, on account of his partial lameness, was generally called 'Club Foot'. He was the N.K.V.D. specialist who dealt with officers of conservative and noble background, and groups who had social connections with the Army. During the past years he had won many of them over to a German policy of friendship with Russia. Commissar Savelyev received me in the presence of Lewes Litzmann, Major von Frankenberg and Jesco von Puttkamer.

'Now, are you very dissatisfied, Herr von Einsiedel?' he asked me, weighing each word with care but without looking at me. I did not answer.

'Trains also go to the east, Herr von Einsiedel!' His large eyeballs turned slowly towards me underneath his fleshy eyelids, and a scarcely noticeable smile played around his mouth. I looked at Puttkamer, who, with a poker face, was watching Savelyev. Frankenberg first turned red and then deadly pale. Lewes Litzmann could hardly conceal his pleasure at my discomfort. A terrible fear came over me. Nobody in the Committee had previously been the subject of such an unconcealed threat before witnesses, at least not so far as I knew. It was only with difficulty that I managed to control my temper.

'I have never doubted that, Herr Savelyev,' I answered in the most casual tone which I could manage.

'Very good,' said Savelyev, and left the room.

'Well, that was clear,' spluttered Frankenberg, who was very excited. 'I have always told you, Einsiedel, you talk too much. You have put your head in a noose with your fuss over the

"request". Then he went out of the room. Frankenberg looked after the news service on the Committee. His greatest pleasure was to rush from room to room and to revel in the effect of the new stories he told, even if it was only the latest quarrel between two inmates of the members, most of whom were becoming more and more neurotic.

Litzmann took pleasure in trying to raise my spirits.

'That does not mean anything, it is only an attempt to frighten you—he did not really mean it.'

'You should know what he means,' I answered him purposefully. His room-mate, Puttkamer, the only man in the House with whom I dared to speak openly, had long since told me of Litzmann's nightly conversations with the N.K.V.D.

The public warning given to me did not fail to achieve its object. From now on everybody tried to avoid, as far as possible, political discussions or conversations about his own fate or that of the prisoners in general. We played bridge, learned Russian, or wandered through the snowdrifts on the frozen Klyasma.

A last load left for Germany. In it were the evangelical parsons Krummacher, Schröder and Sönnichsen, also Lewes Litzmann, and, to everybody's surprise, two of the signatories of the 'manifesto', Pastor Kaiser and Colonel Steidle.

Our radio, which was the last link with the outside world, except for *Izvestia*, was taken away from us. The newspapers which we had now and then received from the Soviet Zone failed to appear. Weinert left for Germany. The National Committee was finally dead.

25th May, 1946

That morning we were suddenly told that the House of the National Committee must be dissolved. The Government of the Soviet Union had revoked the special laws adopted in wartime, and the building in which we were living had to be given back to the trades unions for which it had been a convalescent home before the war.

The inmates of the House were divided in two groups. We tried

in vain to understand the basis of the division, but we were never able to discover whether it had anything to do with the welfare of those concerned, or with the trust or distrust that any individual enjoyed with the N.K.V.D. I was in the group which, besides Generals Seydlitz, Korfes and Lensky, included also Homann, Stösslein, Frankenberg, Fleischer, Puttkamer, General Paulus' adjutant, Colonel Adam, and a few other officers. Our destination was rumoured to be the Generals' Camp 48, 180 miles north-east of Moscow, in the vicinity of Ivanovo.

Two lorries appeared at our house, into which we were packed like sardines.

'The saviours of Germany are being wheeled off,' I whispered to Puttkamer. It was our only consolation that we could still laugh at ourselves.

Those who usually remained silent under Homann's leadership would have liked to make some speech of thanks to the Soviet on this occasion, for having put the House at our disposal 'in our struggle for national liberty in such a generous fashion', but even they remained silent and tried to put on as good a face as possible.

Only one of them lost his self-control: General of the Artillery Walter von Seydlitz-Kurzbach. As the good-natured Russian commandant of the House, who, in fact, was in no way to blame for the whole business, came up and put his usual question: 'How do you all feel?' Seydlitz whispered, '*Otchen*' and then '*otchen, otchen kharasho . . . very, very, very good.*'

CHAPTER X

The Ghost of Stalingrad

26th May, 1946.

YESTERDAY'S OUTBURST on the part of von Seydlitz was not only brought about by our general humiliation. The day before our departure Vincent Müller, whom we all hated, was taken from Lunovo in General Petroff's car to the villa in Moscow where Field Marshal Paulus and General Buschenhagen had been lodged in relatively luxurious conditions since their appearance at the Nürenberg trials. The fact that his great rival Paulus, whom he so wished to outdo, lived in a villa, and was allowed to visit the Moscow theatres, cinemas and museums, while he, Seydlitz, was taken back in a shabby truck to the place from which he had been fetched in a luxurious Buick—this made him lose his self-control.

Paulus's fate had certainly assumed a very different shape from his own. It was nearly two years since the field marshal had been in Lunovo for the first time, when Seydlitz thought he was so near his own triumph. It was only the previous summer that Paulus had been finally moved from the small country house where he lived with several colonels and generals, and brought to Lunovo. In Lunovo he was, for a time, in a very difficult position. The occupants of the house were nearly all former combatants at Stalingrad, and felt very strong resentment against the marshal. They reproached him in the first place for not having acted violently enough against Hitler, and secondly for not having organised the defence of the encircled troops properly: furthermore he had neither accepted responsibility for the capitulation nor gone down fighting with his army.

Paulus was a beaten man, tired, resigned, his face distorted by a continuous nervous twitch. He kept himself aloof from all dis-

cussions and sought relief in his favourite pursuits: drawing, carrying out small jobs, and playing cards with his comrades from his home province of Hesse.

It was impossible not to feel sympathy in one's personal dealings with this cultured and educated man, who, in his outward appearance and his gestures and behaviour, resembled a professor rather than a soldier. His opinions and judgments were considered and pondered over from all aspects. Generals who had known him before said that this wise way of expressing himself and his cautious mind had caused him to be nicknamed 'Cunctator'. At the time of Stalingrad we learned from his entourage that he had let himself be more and more influenced by his energetic and unscrupulous Chief of Staff, General Schmidt—'Lying Arthur' as he was called in the Wehrmacht—who had taken control out of his hands. One had the impression that this son of a parson from Hesse was not a general like Reichenau or Air Marshal von Richthofen, whose unbridled temperament, ambition and recklessness made them such feared commanders. Nor was Paulus a man who, out of mere blind obedience, had sacrificed his army. He appeared much more to have been overcome by the force of events at Stalingrad, as with his sharp intelligence he realised his weakness in face of the great responsibility which fate had placed upon him. He was unable to make up his mind to try and break out of the encirclement against Hitler's order, because he did not believe that in his position he could judge whether, from the military point of view, the sacrifice of the Sixth Army might not really be the last chance to establish a stable front. Moreover, he did not want to give any cause for future accusations that he had been responsible, through disobedience, for the failure of the Russian campaign. Furthermore, he had not been able to judge, as he stated, whether a premature surrender at Stalingrad would not have brought about important political developments, such as, for example, preventing the eventual entry of Turkey and Japan into the war on the side of Germany against the Soviet Union. How far Paulus had been supported in his conception of the untenability of the position by his superiors, the Army Group command and the chief of the General Staff

at their conferences with Hitler, or how far these men had, on the contrary, worked against him by not lending their authority to Hitler's promise of reinforcements and to his orders for delay—on these matters he never spoke his mind.

The Soviet offer of capitulation had been refused in the Army Order of the day, in which it was stated:

'We all know what threatens us if the Army ceases to resist. For the majority of us, it is certain death, either by bullet, hunger or the sufferings of dishonourable imprisonment. For us there is only one way out: to fight until the last round.'

Among the members of the National Committee, this Army Order was the cause of great disapproval of Paulus. They blamed him for not carrying out this order to the end and for letting his troops lay down their arms only after hundreds of thousands of them had died of hunger and cold, or had been killed by the enemy's bullets, and the remainder had exhausted themselves and no longer had any power of resistance to face the rigours of imprisonment. Paulus defended his action by declaring that he knew nothing of this order. Many people thought that this was not completely truthful. Was it out of personal cowardice that Paulus and his generals tried to escape death on the battlefield, or were they the captains who bravely refused to leave the sinking ship? The undisputed courage which they personally, and the officers' corps in general, had shown during the two wars, makes the former explanation unlikely. Perhaps their attitude can be clarified by a declaration made by a Stalingrad general during the last days of encirclement. He said: 'I refuse to put a bullet through my head for that scoundrel Hitler.' This declaration may seem meaningless in view of the 300,000 lives which they had already sacrificed for that scoundrel; and yet it is possible to have some sympathy with it, if one accepts the possibility that these generals recognised the real character of their 'Führer' only when they realised the treacherous way in which Hitler had behaved towards them and their army.

During a conversation in the summer of 1945, the criticism was made against Paulus that his decision to surrender and become a prisoner of war, which had been contrary to the will of the Führer,

could only have been fully justified if he had from that moment thrown all the might of his authority into the struggle against Hitler.

'It was more than a coincidence that Field Marshal von Witzleben and his comrades were strangled on precisely the same day that you acted for the first time against Hitler,' a young officer said to him. 'If you had taken part in the activities of the National Committee a year earlier, you might have helped the men of the 20th July to succeed!'

Paulus refused to agree with this. He insisted that he had acted neither too late nor too soon. Even if there may now be good reason to doubt whether any action on his part would have had any influence on events, it was grotesque that one of the main reasons which he gave for his hesitation were the diplomatic compliments paid to him by Pieck and Weinert during those days in August 1944 when they were trying to win him over. A violent attack of nervous twitching in his face betrayed the embarrassment which he suffered at the mere mention of the empty compliments of these men, with whom he had for so long refused to sit at the same table.

A few weeks after Paulus's arrival at Lunovo, the Communists and the Russians made further attempts to win him over, using Homann and Vincent Müller as intermediaries. These two men, who were certainly equal to Paulus in intelligence, but superior to him in will power, finally managed to persuade him to disclose what he knew about the preparations for the Russian campaign, since, as Chief of Operations with the Chief of the General Staff, he had held an influential position at that time. What a decisive blow Paulus could have struck against Hitler's prestige in 1943, at a time when large circles in Germany still believed in the story of a preventive war against Russia!

But now, when it was too late, and only under great psychological pressure, he put on record all his knowledge. This document, as we were soon to find out, was used as a basis for his indictment and also as his testimony in the Nuremberg Trials. Frequently during the winter, the chief Soviet prosecutor,

General Rudenko, would appear at the house to find out how the work was progressing. General Buschenhagen, too, was brought to the house. It was his evidence which gave the trial of 'War Criminals' in Finland such a sensational twist against his one-time Finnish comrades, and later he was also to give evidence at Nuremberg.

The Olympic rider, von Wagenheim, who had been taken prisoner on the central front, used to come with him. He had been assistant to the military attaché in Ankara. The Russians interrogated him frequently, using every kind of device, such as making promises and threats and giving him chocolate and cigarettes in their efforts to extract from him incriminating evidence against Papen; but judging by the outcome of Nuremberg they must have been unsuccessful.

During the period in which Vincent Müller was working on Paulus, I happened to be standing near our house in the snow hidden by some trees, cleaning my uniform. At that moment, from one of the entrances which also led to the offices of the Russians, walked Vincent Müller. Like a hunted wolf he looked right and left, but he did not notice me. Then he quickly stole back into the house, by the other entrance. I could not understand his behaviour. No man was likely to leave the rooms, which had been placed at our disposal, without a coat at twenty degrees below zero, merely in order to return to them immediately through another entrance. It was also possible to enter our rooms directly from the Russian offices without going out of doors. Quite by chance, I mentioned the incident to a comrade and made fun of it.

'Müller has obviously also acquired a prisoner's "twitch",' I said. But he put me wise. 'Are you quite blind?' he said with some surprise. 'Müller has not eaten anything for days.'

'What do you mean?' I asked, puzzled.

'Since he has been working on Paulus, he has been receiving special rations over there. That is why he no longer likes our cabbage soup and porridge. He has told us how he had tried to refuse this kind of food from the Russians. But the Russians replied: "Eat, general! Do not offend us. You are fulfilling a

great political task!" So, of course he does not want to be seen too often leaving the Russian quarters.'

Since Müller was rewarded with caviar sandwiches, he could not be blamed altogether for the pressure he put on Paulus, which frequently caused the latter to break into fits of crying. It was obviously all part of the system. The Russians did not give up their methods even in cases where they could have achieved the desired results without them. What their motive was is difficult to explain. They must have known that if they had any intention of ever sending any of us back home, this connection between the Nuremberg Trial and the caviar sandwiches was bound to come to light. But, apparently they did not mind this. They seemed really convinced that the 'material basis' overruled the 'ideological superstructure'.

Now that I have mentioned this, I must also relate my own experiences in this field. When I lay in the hospital barracks in Krasnogorsk, worn to a skeleton and utterly exhausted by attacks of fever, a Russian officer appeared one day and brought me some white bread and dripping. He said that he had managed to obtain this for me from Moscow at the request of the head woman doctor. He came several times and these gifts, ridiculously small though they were if compared to normal conditions, obviously helped me to overcome my illness. I was genuinely grateful to the head woman doctor. It was only weeks later, when I learned that the Russian who brought me the food was Commissar Stern, that I began to wonder how disinterested this help had really been. A similar thing happened to me at the anti-Fascist school. Bechler and I had been promised that when we had completed our course, we should be taken to Moscow for a few days to see the town. This promise, like all the other promises of being given an opportunity to see life in the Soviet Union outside the camp, was never kept. Instead, I was kept under interrogation for days about my experiences as a fighter pilot. When I protested and demanded my immediate return to Lunovo, they tried to make me change my mind by offering me wine and food parcels. It was only when I complained to the head of the school that the N.K.V.D. finally left me alone.

It was an open secret in the camps that the N.K.V.D., at all their interrogations, tried to loosen the tongues of their prisoners with food and cigarettes, a method which, considering the starvation conditions in the camps, was bound to show some success. Only those who have been on the point of dying of hunger for months can judge how much more effective a plate of soup can, under certain circumstances, be than threats of corporal punishment—if between the cup and the lip of the hungry man lies only the need to denounce and betray.

The demoralising effect of hunger and the methods of corruption used by the Polit-officers and refugees in the camps, as well as the privileged treatment given to the inhabitants of the House and the Committee delegates, had created an inseparable link between the naked instinct for self preservation and the functioning of the National Committee. Sometimes it was even difficult to tell how far this had influenced one's own actions, even though I had joined the anti-Fascist group in the camp in circumstances and at a time when there had been no question of deriving any advantages from such action.

At all events, I had the same bad conscience as everyone else who belonged to the group. So long as there was a war, and it was possible to look upon this as a necessary evil, and the outcome of circumstances from which there was no escape, it was easy to justify oneself. But my experience with Müller had brought up all these misgivings again. I had the feeling that I needed a bath immediately, in order to wash off all the filth into which we had got ourselves, in order to come out of the half light and rid myself of the feeling of revulsion which I had towards myself and my entire surroundings.

A few weeks after Christmas, Paulus and Buschenhagen were taken away. Soon after, the report of their testimony at the Nuremberg Court appeared in *Izvestia*. 'The ghost of Stalingrad enters the hall and testifies against the Nazi criminals,' wrote the Russian reporter.

CHAPTER XI

The Return Home

23rd April, 1947

IT WAS almost impossible to believe: I was on my way home to Germany. There could be no more doubt about it. I was waiting on the Bielorusski station in Moscow for the train to Brest-Litovsk. I would, with luck, be in Berlin in three days' time. I could hardly realise it yet.

It was over a year now since we had arrived at the Generals' Camp 48. Our arrival there had been a sensation for the two hundred generals who lived there, together with forty Hungarian, four Rumanian and two Italian generals. They had watched us with contempt as we settled down. With a few exceptions they all scrupulously avoided contact with us. Even most of those who had, after July 20th, taken part in the various proclamations of the Committee, had now broken away from such activities, had submitted to the procedure of 'courts of honour' and begged for reinstatement from the large group of generals who were taken prisoner in May 1945. The common passion shared by these generals was an almost pathological hatred of the Allies, especially Russia. The orders and decorations which were taken away from them according to the resolution of the Allied Control Council appeared, carved twice their natural size, on their walking sticks, snuff boxes and ash trays. Their war exploits, from the front line to Maxim's and the Folies Bergeres, were their topics of conversation, spiced with all the cheap witticism of the messes during the last ten years. The Third Reich was wonderful: if only Hitler had had a little more knowledge of strategy—such was their general line of thought.

They refused to realise that it was not the fall of Hitler but their blind obedience, even when the Reich Chancellery lay in

ruins, which had brought Germany to catastrophe, and the hated enemy, whom they had always underestimated, to the banks of the Elbe. Challenges, menaces and insults towards us 'traitors' were the order of the day. Only when we complained to the Russian commandant of the camp did they stop provoking us.

There were many N.K.V.D. spies among the generals, chiefly among those who had something to fear from Soviet war trials, and therefore were easily blackmailed. In the winter of 1945-6, thirty German generals received death sentences and were executed. Most of them were commanders of rear army areas involved in partisan battles and reprisals against the civil population followed by labour levies. The Russians carried out their investigations with untiring thoroughness.

Under the pressure of the behaviour of these generals, we members of the Committee recovered, at least on the surface, a certain solidarity. We did not wish to air our differences amongst ourselves or with the Russians in front of these men who persecuted us with venomous hatred. Our time was spent in learning languages, working in the garden, playing football and bridge. The worst ordeal for us was the ignorance of our own fate and that of our families. We were almost the only ones in the camp who had as yet received no mail, and gradually the conviction grew within us that all our families had been destroyed in the general devastation. The first news we got which dispelled our anxiety was in the autumn of 1946. A small group among us had constantly attempted to persuade the rest of the National Committee to make vigorous representations to the Russians and to demand a definite decision about us. But the fear that the Russians might misinterpret such an action, together with their continual promises concerning our imminent repatriation, made all these attempts fall through. In January 1947, I finally screwed up my courage and, against the advice of well-meaning friends, addressed a letter to the Russians in which I asked to be released or transported to an ordinary labour camp. I based my plea on a declaration made by Weinert in September '45, according to which our repatriation and participation in the

political reconstruction of Germany depended on the confidence the Soviet authorities had of the democratic state of mind of each individual. I demanded an explanation as to why, fifteen months after this declaration, and in spite of all promises, we were still imprisoned in the camp. Of course I did not attach great hopes to this action. But I was certain that such a written protest would at least reach the heads of the Prisoner-of-war Administration and I was anxious that these gentlemen be made aware that we in no way desired to abuse their hospitality any longer. We could not hasten our return by simply waiting for something to turn up and doing nothing about it.

The reaction of the Russian camp administrators to my protests was certainly not reassuring and seemed to confirm the warnings of my friends. When the Russian political officer made his occasional rounds in the camp and talked to us he cut me dead, in an obviously deliberate manner. I did not care. This officer was only small fry and it was in his interest to be able to report to his chief that all was quiet and everybody satisfied in the camp. For this reason he took my letter to be a personal insult against himself. But I was convinced, in view of the obtuseness of the Soviet Organisation, that one could not shout too loudly in order to obtain results. If I did not have a reply to my appeal I had decided to go on a hunger strike on July 1st. This measure had not only got General Hoffmeister out of the Lubianka prison but also helped many a young officer who had been interrogated once or twice and then been left forgotten in his cell.

In the spring the Foreign Ministers were meeting in Moscow. Their speeches, full of mutual reproaches, covered the pages of Soviet newspapers, and the Soviets, in their verbose radio commentaries, made fun of the vain attempts of the West to revise the agreements concluded at Yalta and Potsdam. One day we heard on the camp loudspeaker the name of Seydlitz; it was a report on Bevin's speech, in which he had reproached the Soviet Union for the creation of the so-called Seydlitz Army. Seydlitz understood no Russian. Greatly disturbed, he came to ask what it was all about.

'Your army is to be disbanded!' we told him, laughing.

Deprived of one more hope, he slipped back into the block house, specially built for him by the Russians, who feared an attempt on his life by the other generals.

Yesterday the duty officer suddenly appeared in the camp and ordered:

'Einsiedel is to get out, with all his belongings: quickly—with-in half an hour!' Was it the train for the east? Who could tell? Siberia and Germany were equally possible.

In the commandant's office, the camp commander told me that in four days I should be in Germany.

'I was promised that by someone else two years ago,' I replied. He gave me his 'officer's word of honour'. I felt sceptical about it. It was only when I was actually in the Bielorusski station, from which trains leave only for the west, that the Lubianka prison began to recede into the background, and I began to hope. Could it be really true?

I bought a copy of *Pravda* at the station and began to see what had caused this sudden change in my life. *Pravda*, in one of its articles, mocked at the rumours prevailing in the West concerning the Seydlitz Army and concerning the new 'Committee for the Military Restoration of Germany', which was supposed to be meeting in Moscow under the presidency of Field Marshal Paulus, whose political adviser I was reported to be. How could this rumour be more effectively refuted than by the release of one of the three men mentioned, even though he be the least important of all?

As I folded the newspaper, I was addressed by a Russian officer who sat beside me in the waiting room. He requested a needle and some cotton. I looked at him in surprise as he took off his coat and sat on his suitcase quite unembarrassed in his striped, coloured shirt without sleeves, and sewed a fresh white collar inside his coat. When he noticed that I was watching him, he laughed: 'People are very civilised in Germany. One must wear a clean collar there, or they give you a funny look,' he said in broken German.

All the Russians around me were returning from leave. Their joy at being able to go to Germany once again could be easily read on their faces. They were enthusiastic about it. Not only the cleanliness and order, but the restaurants, the theatres and the shops appealed to them. They were particularly impressed by the zeal of the Germans, by their independence and their initiative. 'Germans good workers,' said my neighbour. (He was in charge of a telephone station somewhere in Thuringia.) 'You tell him once—he does his job well. You tell him twice—he is angry, he thinks you don't trust him.'

'Where is it better—here or there?' I asked cautiously.

Indignantly the Russians answered: 'In Germany, of course.'

This was really a surprising change of attitude. During the war it was hard to find a single Russian who had a good word to say about Germany. And now there was a sudden change of heart, in spite of the anti-German note which still dominated Soviet propaganda. Was some sort of understanding breaking its way through in Germany, at least from below? Did the 'average Soviet citizen' realise that he had still a lot to learn from us as well as from all western countries? Those with whom I had had to deal were certainly completely cured of the unbearable boastfulness and conceit which reigned here after the war. With Russians such as these there should be a possible collaboration.

1st May, 1947

Transit Camp Brest-Litovsk. The grey and cloudy dawn began to break over Bielo-Russia. A cold, damp wind blew through the town. In the camp it stirred up the smells of latrines, corpses, barracks and kitchen refuse, and chased the prisoners as they ran in their torn, threadbare soldiers' shirts, across the camp square. Only one or two shivering silhouettes lingered in a corner of the kitchen barracks and, with screwed-up eyes, stared through a small window at the food containers.

'Open the door, you hulks,' one of them cried to the cooks, who leaned comfortably against the warm tiled stove, smoking their morning cigarettes.

'The mangy dogs,' they muttered contemptuously, and spat tobacco out of the window. 'You bloody so and so's,' the others swore outside, having learnt the Russian words for it. 'Look at these fat swine lolling about.'

'Quiet, you fellows! They won't steal your nettle soup today, not on May the 1st!' The words were uttered by a tall, white-haired man, who called his comrades to order, his mouth straight as a line, his eyes watchful and ironical. His teeth had been knocked out in a concentration camp, the scar on his forehead had been made by a sentry outside the 'Vorwärts' building. He had been a Spartakist, a regular member of the German C.P., an agent of the Comintern, officer in the Red Army, and sentenced to death in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Instead he had been drafted to 999 Penal Battalion, from which he had deserted to the Red Army, had been through Lubianka prison, the anti-Fascist school, and was an active leader in the labour camp. Now he was waiting with his comrades for the transport which was to take them to Germany at the request of the Social Unity Party, a priority group of 250 men, distinguished Communists, members of independent Socialist groups, relatives of victims of Fascism, and sons of Social Democrats who had participated in the fusion of both workers' parties in the eastern zone. I, too, was included in this group.

The prisoners came from all the corners of the Soviet Union. From Murmansk, Georgia and Bessarabia, from the Donetz Basin, from Karaganda and the Northern Urals, from Minsk, Asbest or Omsk, and from Kaliningrad. The story of their transport to Brest-Litovsk would read like a novel. A party of three men had to sit on the buffers of the train for a stretch of 1,800 miles because the train attendants wanted to steal their money. One of them, a man of almost sixty, a former Socialist, who had contracted heart trouble during his time in a concentration camp, had to be tied to the train by his comrades for fear that he would drop off through sheer weakness. An old Communist, shaking his head, told the story of how some Russians started quarrelling in his train, shot one of their own men and threw him out of the window. Not one of the other travellers,

among whom there were some officers, took the slightest notice of this. Some others only got dry bread and water for a three weeks' trip, because the guards had sold the supplies of food allotted to them. As they had already been starved in the camp, they arrived more feeble than I had been after my transport to Camp 74 in September. Theft was on such a scale in the trains that one of each group had to stay awake to prevent everything being taken from the others' pockets.

And their stories about the camps! The endless, pathetic stories of hunger, corruption, terror and robbery in their extreme forms, four hundred grammes of under-baked bread, as much watery porridge—that was what their nourishment consisted of at best. And with this ten to twelve hours' work in shifts, road building, blast firing, peat cutting, hacking wood and floating timber; strong men became skeletons in a few weeks. The lucky ones got transferred to a war prisoners' hospital, where they were revived in order to be exploited once more. The unlucky ones left the camp only when they were at the end of their tether, so that there should be no cases of death on the camp lists. But in some camps the administration did not even take that precaution.

The corrupt camp authorities filled their pockets with the proceeds of stolen food supplies or of articles made in the camp shops. A German officer, a former Communist deputy (his wife was supposed to have written a book about her own experiences in Nazi prisons), who lodged a complaint against a general's A.D.C. who was a thief, was arrested for ten days and his name struck off our transport list of men to be repatriated. A German camp manager, a former officer of the secret police, who had participated on a large scale in the Russians black marketeering, read aloud with great contempt the punishment which the hated Communist received from his Russian 'comrades' for his honesty. Sometimes the 'authorities' interfered. Ten, twenty, forty Russians were packed off in their wooden boots, together with the German camp officials who had instigated them and sometimes forced them to swindle, for ten or twenty years hard labour in Siberia. Four weeks later, the new camp administration was indistinguishable from the old. A Communist dockyard worker

who, before he deserted and joined the Red Army had, for twenty-five years, gone through all the ordeals which Party membership brought with it, was sent to a prisoners' camp in Bielo-Russia in 1945. There the prisoners died like flies, about thirty a day. A gangster lot of Russians and Germans ran the camp, stealing even the prisoners' breadcrumbs. He felt it his duty to speak to the camp commandant as comrade to comrade and to call upon his honour as a Bolshevik and his duty to the Communist movement. He was arrested at once. He got less than a hundred grammes of bread a day. He was to be eliminated through hunger and had only a few more days to live. A commission arrived from Moscow. A comrade tipped him the news by smuggling a note to his cell. As the commission approached the prison building he began to scream. The cell was opened and he got the opportunity of complaining to a general. The latter listened to his complaints and set him free, severely cautioning the commandant. This protected him from possible acts of revenge and he was elected camp leader. But four weeks later he began to realise that even in this capacity he was only able to remedy the worst blights, that the system of corruption was all powerful because it was total, because everybody was participating in it, because it was the means of existence of the members of the camp administration and of the population outside the camp. The situation was at its worst in the camps which lay in the regions devastated by the war, as there the population was utterly destitute and as a result was lost to all restraint.

In the spring of 1947 transports of returning prisoners of war passed almost daily through Brest-Litovsk. The return had started at last. But the cargoes those trains carried! Starved, emaciated skeletons; human wrecks convulsed with dysentery due to lack of food: gaunt figures with trembling limbs, expressionless grey faces, and dim eyes which brightened up only at the sight of bread or a cigarette: each of them a living indictment of the Soviet Union, a death sentence to Communism.

Lorry loads of homeward-bound dead from the trains were brought into our camps. We, the privileged ex-prisoners, were locked up in our barracks. We were not to see this. What naïve

precautions! We saw everything: the dead being undressed by their comrades, who left them their only shirts, dragged by the legs to the car and thrust into one of the stinking barracks which infested the whole camp with its stench, and finally thrown into a mass communal grave at night. One of the poor wretches came to life for a few hours as he fell from the lorry, another one did the same when thrown into the grave. But they were definitely dead when brought back to the camp. The Soviet doctor who had to certify each death was reprimanded for 'lack of attention'.

The doctor also examined the men at the station and withdrew those who were too weak to travel or still too strong to be returned. Both categories met again after a certain time in the Brest-Litovsk labour camps. Brest-Litovsk needed labour hands.

For what? Daily the trains from Germany arrived with booty: dismantled parts, the spoils of the administrators. All this had to be transferred to the Russian gauge. Steel structures for machine factories, with the machines which belonged to them, telephone exchanges, pianos, bathroom equipment, wireless apparatus, sacks of sugar, yards and yards of material, boxes of chocolates, rolls of paper, typewriters, barrels of butter, stockings, clothes, haberdashery, everything, in fact, that a modern industrial country could produce, and besides that masses of foodstuffs.

Oh, for the happy time of the imperialistic Versailles Treaty! The 'Socialistic' peace looked very different. If all these things were to be put to a sensible use, some justification might have been found. Nobody could deny that the Soviet Union had the right to demand reparations. But when equipment for unloading these goods was not available, the valuable machines were simply rolled out of the train on two planks and allowed to crash on to the rails. Levers and hinges snapped, shafts and cylinders were bent, contacts torn off and valves broken into pieces, valuable pieces of machinery were rent in two and despatched in different directions, so that they lost all their usefulness. The consumer goods were sold in great quantities by guards and prisoners on the black market in Brest-Litovsk. Or else they remained lying about for so long that everything became covered with rust or rotted away. In this way, a large portion of the reparation

deliveries which arrived were merely destroyed or wasted, and were of no use to the Soviet Union. How absurd it all was and how shattering for us was this senseless waste.

'Railwaymen, help to realise and surpass the post-war five-year plan! Work for a better life and the further prosperity of your Socialist Fatherland! Raise high the banner of Socialist competition!' Such slogans were posted up every few yards within the working areas. 'According to plan,' our old Communists cried, with bitter laughter, when they saw another lathe crash upon the lines and fall to pieces. And then began the stories about the factories and mines where they had worked. The same thing everywhere. Figures and more figures, statistics, lists, rules, orders and threats of penalties. 'Plan' accomplished to 93, 105, 110, 230, 320 per cent. Great victory on the production front, 20 per cent improvement of quality as compared with the past year.' Nobody was interested in the fact that 80 per cent of the production was wasted, that hundreds lost their lives at it, that the work was carried on irresponsibly both in regard to material and labour. The important thing was somehow to claim the figures laid down in the plan. A machine shed was being erected in the Dön Basin. The German engineer refused to accept responsibility for the approved plan of the roof of the building. He proposed an alteration. No attention was paid to it. The building crashed at the first thunderstorm and both Russians and Germans were buried under the debris. A scapegoat was looked for and found—it was the German engineer! Sabotage! His sentence was twenty-five years' hard labour.

Hundreds of similar stories were told which pointed to the same conclusion. Great efforts were being made in the Soviet Union to build up a strong industry, raise production and the armed strength of the country, and eventually the standard of living. But the very Party, the very machinery of State, which was behind the whole plan as initiator, organiser, producer of incentive and discipline, often destroyed with one hand what had just been built with the other. Bureaucracy, distrust and the blind obedience which is demanded so implicitly at the centre of this immense, inflated organisation, paralysed the initiative of the

people, killed their sense of responsibility, prevented any necessary measures from being taken quickly, and strangled all constructive criticism. Is this a typically Russian phenomenon which finds its origin in backwardness and past centuries of stagnation? Or is it the result of over-centralisation in the Soviet State, the inevitable outcome of the Socialist structure? Is the policy of the Kremlin, the Bolshevik Politbureau, responsible for it all? Is it the Russian temperament or Socialist theory?

On May the 1st, the 'holiday of the world proletariats', nobody worked. Tired and hungry prisoners lolled on their bug-infested bunks. Now and then the nettle soup would drive them to the latrine. The camp looked deserted and gloomy. At the corner of the barracks a creaking loudspeaker was swinging in the wind, the speeches, the 'endless storms of applause', the order, the volley of guns, the din of the tanks and aeroplane engines at the Moscow May Parade sounded ghost like on the empty square of the camp. In the steam bath houses, and the camp delousing sheds, officials hung up posters with the 1st of May watchwords on the walls: 'We thank the Soviet Union for freeing us of Fascism!' 'Long life to our wise and beloved leader, Stalin!' 'Fight with the Soviet Union for a better, peaceful life!'

At midday, shrill whistles resounded in the barracks with the call to 'take part in the May festivities'. Apathetic and sluggish, the prisoners crawled from their bunks, wrapped themselves up in cloaks and blankets, and shuffled along to the meeting hall. With curses and threats the 'activists' chased the sluggards out of the bath huts. 'Come on, don't you try to get out of it. D'you want your name to be struck off the list, eh? Get a move on!'

At last everyone was ready. The leader of the group combed his hair, his A.D.C. brushed his newly tailored suit, and pranced out of the gates. He disappeared into the *Kommandantur*. The prisoners sat in a dull stupor, some of them crouching on the damp floor. Like a fog, the smell of urine, musty underclothes and squashed bugs settled about them. Now and then the shrill cry of the guard could be heard 'Put out your cigarette, you saboteur!' The old Communists had foregathered in a corner. They smoked and chattered, paying no heed to the guard. The

'activists' did not dare to interfere with them. 'Did you hear that half-wit! Wanting to strike us off the list, the so-and-so bastard. And makes it sound as if it were a reward to be allowed to stay here, the stinker.'

'Well, all I can say to you is that my first trip when we get to Berlin will be to see Wilhelm—I'll have something to tell him.'

'He damn well ought to give a hand to his old comrades.'

'Have you gone crazy? D'you want to disappear like Heinz Neumann or Remmele, or Hugo Eberlein and all the rest of them?'

The white-haired Spartakist interrupted them:

'Boys, keep quiet. You can argue when you're back home. Wait until you get there.'

'We can deal ourselves with our enemies. God preserve us from our friends,' murmured one of them, and went on shouting: 'For fifteen years: every penny to the Party, every free minute for the Party, and then months in prison and years in a concentration camp. The dirty dogs.' His words resounded in the room.

The old man seized him by the arm. 'Karl, don't go and make trouble. Pull yourself together. There's no sense in it. Don't do yourself in ten minutes before the end.'

The minutes went by, an hour passed, perhaps two. Suddenly the door flew open. 'Attention!' cried the leader of the camp and reported in Russian to the commandant: 'The whole camp in readiness for the May celebration, major.' The commandant took up his position under the poster of Stalin. The camp attendants sang the Soviet hymn. The leader opened the meeting: 'I call for the election of honorary chairman. I suggest as first candidate the great leader of the Soviet people, Generalissimo Stalin.' He began to applaud. The commandant applauded. The 'Activists' applauded. 'I suggest . . .'

The commandant suddenly jumped up: 'Why no applause? Why no shouts? Once again: Hurrah for Comrade Stalin!' A few hurrahs were heard, then some clapping. The major flared up. 'I order applause! For the first time, applause. Comrade Stalin, hurrah!'

This brought the old Cominterli agent to his feet. 'Come on,

boys, for the last time! You have my word for it. For the last time! To Comrade Stalin—hurrah!’ He shouted as loud as he could and the others did the same. ‘Comrade Stalin, hurrah!’ Two minutes, three, five, until the commandant stopped them. ‘That’s enough. Now, Comrade Molotov, hurrah!’

Little by little, the men began to find some amusement in it. Shouting kept them warm, at least. They began suggesting more and more names to the chairman. ‘Comrade Budenny, Comrade Voroshilov, Comrade Mikoyan, Comrade Ivanov, Comrade Stakhanov, Comrade Officer, Comrade Leader, Comrade Major. Hurrah and one more hurrah!’

The commandant was radiant.

‘Good meeting, very good. Much success. Germans fine.’ And he called out: ‘Attention! To the leader of the German workers, Wilhelm Pieck. Hurrah!’

‘For the last time!’ cried the old Communists. ‘Comrade Pieck. Hurrah!’

15th July, 1947

The journey through Poland and the stay in Gronenfeld camp were now behind me. With a fluttering heart I was stumbling once again, on June 26th, along the streets of a Berlin destroyed by shells and bombs. Home again after more than five years! I hesitated for a long while whether I should not give up all this political muddle and go and stay with my relations in the western part of Germany. But I could not bring myself to do so. It was no great merit to defend German-Soviet collaboration in prison, as it had simply meant being on the side of the strongest Party. For this reason alone, I could not very well desert the principles I had held so firmly for five years even though I was free, and public opinion was against me. It was, of course, a hopeless undertaking to convince people in Germany of the truth of this political statement. The prisoner-of-war question or the Oder-Neisse Line, the deportations, the concentration camp, the spy system and the unrestricted lawlessness of the Russians made all discussion impossible. It was my first general impression that the people here were

prepared to forget the dreadful excesses of the Red Army when it entered Berlin, were it not for the terrifying continued presence of these manifestations. In face of such facts, every theoretical statement on the bitter necessities of the revolutionary struggle and the difficulties facing the construction of a Socialist way of life remained pure rhetoric. At best, one was looked upon as a naïve dreamer if one admitted this, but more often as a turn-coat and a scoundrel. I had cherished no great hopes concerning the situation I would find in the Soviet-occupied zone. But even these were shattered.

There could be no question of any independence for the German Communists. Exactly as in the Committee, Ulbricht was the key man here, the machine that automatically registered the Communist orders and carried them out. The Russians have coined the right word for that type: *Apparatchik*. This man ruled like a crowned toad over the Party, poisoned the air with distrust and fear, and gave all higher positions to his devoted slaves who were backed and controlled by the N.K.V.D. In a slavish way, paying no heed to historical, cultural or political conditions, the Soviet regulations were imitated and imposed upon us, often perhaps against the better judgment of Soviet-occupation officials, who did not dare, however, to make any independent decisions adapted to German circumstances, because that might have made them guilty of a sacrilegious deviation.

But it is no use complaining—one must be consistent if one is prepared to admit the necessity and the success of the revolution in Russia. If one has the courage to accept all the unpleasant phenomena as inevitable evils, as the logical result of Russia's history, as a consequence of the blind hatred and lack of understanding which the rest of the world showed from the beginning towards the young Soviet State, and lastly as a consequence of Hitler's attack (which in a way justified the previous uncompromising harshness of Stalin's dictatorship)—then one also must accept the situation in Germany.

I could not help thinking how much more healthy, natural and logical the whole development would have been if, in 1918, the

working class had completed the revolution here as well. What a stimulus—which would have given rise to a counter-stimulus—could have been absorbed from the Soviet Union and what great creative forces would have then been unleashed in Russia! But this opportunity no longer existed. The revolution had been victorious only in a backward country. It could only be carried out there with an incredible effort, an iron discipline and an unscrupulous use of power. Since it was now being exported from Russia to Germany there was nothing else to do but to clench one's teeth and wait for better days, when we would be freed from the rule of force and terror, and at the same time from the necessity to submit to the inhumanity and arbitrary cruelty which every superhuman concentration of power entails. The day must come when the blinkers of a hopelessly limited tea-party dogma will be removed and twice two will once again be four and Rille not be labelled a degenerate bourgeois.

Has the West found any better solution? Has anything been forgotten or learned since 1918 or 1932? Did not the Western Powers make almost all their decisions concerning their defeated enemies in conjunction with the Soviets? Were not the reparations, the dismantling, the war trials and the de-Nazification principle identical, save only that in their case the goal was not economic competition? Where in the West do the principles of freedom, of self-determination of nations and justice still hold good? Is there anything to show that the capitalist world will not, as soon as the destruction of the war is made good, produce the same catastrophes as before—economic chaos and mass unemployment? It is terribly easy to mock at the mistakes and difficulties of a Socialistic Russia; but the most advanced industrial countries, with all the technical, material and cultural advantages, proved unable to avoid the disasters of 1929, 1933 and 1939. Naturally it is tempting to lean towards Western democracy, especially when it is backed by considerable dollar loans. It is more attractive than a Socialism which, as now represented by the Soviet Union, takes the form of a starving, rapacious peasant who cannot bribe, but can only steal. Is Americanism an ideal? Has not the chase after the dollars, the skyscraper, the conveyor

belt, the crime stories, the jazz mania demoralised the world more, and turned men more into beasts than a collectivist party dictatorship inspired by a social ideal? Where is the superior artistic achievement of America, which would morally justify the richness of its ruling classes? Does not the naïve 'thirst for culture' of the Russians, the fight against illiteracy, the mass education of admittedly still inferior doctors, engineers and teachers, the mass production of books by Tolstoy, Pushkin, Gorki and Goethe, and the attempt to make machinery the servant of man by a planned, organised society, give promise of a finer future, even if behind it all there is force and compulsion which often degenerate into lawlessness?

That was how I persuaded myself of the possibilities of collaboration with the Communists in Germany.

So now I was working for the *Tägliche Rundschau*. When I reported to the Central Committee of the Social Unity Party, I was asked what I would like to do. I said that my intention was to earn my living as a journalist. They suggested sending me to Leipzig, to the new Social Science faculty established there by the Party. But I did not want to go into that zone, not even for the price of a scholarship. I would have had the feeling of being buried alive there. After five years' prison, five years in which I had only been able to hear one side, I wanted to breathe an air in which the wind did not always blow from the same quarter. Even Frida Rubiner, 'the old Communist suffragette who ordered Müller and Lenski about like schoolboys, both in the anti-Fascist school and in Lunovo, persuaded me against it. All one could do in Leipzig now, she said, was to starve, and the university was still in a state of chaos. So I followed her advice and on her recommendation went to see the *Rundschau*. But there was another very conclusive reason for this decision. Johannes R. Becher asked me to come and see him at Pankov. There the Party leaders lived like gentlemen in luxurious villas behind barricades and Russian sentries. (Times had changed since Kuibishy and other high officials of the Soviet State lived

in Moscow on, at most, 250 roubles a month in a two-roomed flat.) Becher thought it would be a mistake for me to work directly with the Russians. With my name I could surely do much more effective work in one of the all-parties Welfare Organisations of the Social Unity Party, in the Kulturbund for instance. But I explained my attitude to him as clearly as possible. 'It is already clear to me, Herr Becher, that there is no independent political work for us. If I am to work under the Russians I prefer to deal directly with my masters. We have not been very fortunate with our dear comrades as middlemen. Why should I, for the sake of a transparent disguise, voluntarily give up the possibility of being at the centre of things? It is less dangerous and I should say more useful as far as work is concerned. Now and then, surely, it will be possible to find a Russian who would listen to sensible ideas and criticism?' Becher nodded thoughtfully: 'There is certainly something to be said for that point of view,' he said.

On the first day my new editor, Colonel Kirsanov, took me with him to Lichtenberg, the Information Department of the Soviet Occupation Forces. His chief, Colonel Tulpanov, wished to celebrate his reunion with me. I sat for an hour in his waiting room, listening with amusement to the chatter of Russian officers about their chief. They had no idea that I knew Russian and did not mince their words. 'Is the old man in a good mood today?' each man asked who had to go in and see him. They were all the more surprised when Tulpanov walked out of his room to welcome me with wide-open arms and embraced me in Russian fashion.

'I've marched with him from Stalingrad to Berlin!' was his explanation of our friendship. He then broke off his daily routine and drove me to his villa in Karlshorst. After dinner we had coffee with his family.

'Well—how is the general atmosphere?' asked Tulpanov. This question was inevitable from a Soviet official. I didn't conceal my point of view.

'I have myself experienced to some extent, Colonel, what happened when the Red Army entered Germany. We need not talk about it. But people would be ready to forget it in Germany if

other mistakes were not constantly made. As, for instance, the Oder-Neisse line. They may not say so yet, but it will never be accepted in Germany. Twelve million people expelled. The Soviet Union has given to her enemies in the West a weapon that will remain sharp for decades. Worst of all, however, is the problem of the prisoners of war. If there is no radical change in the treatment of the prisoners, if Moscow does not keep order in the camps with an iron hand and protect the prisoners from starvation and overwork, and guard them from the arbitrariness of local N.K.V.D. men and establish a postal exchange and publish the names of the dead, if Moscow does not officially make some apologies for the situation as it is, and does not promise a change, well then, there is no hope of winning the sympathy of the German people.'

I gave the colonel a picture of the conditions in the camps, the shattering conditions in the transport of repatriated men, of the part played by the local authorities on orders received from headquarters. I did not spare him any details of the horrors which I had heard of in Brest-Litovsk concerning almost 250 camps. Tulpanov did not interrupt, and his face betrayed that he believed what I said and was himself depressed and shattered about the possible sinister results of these conditions.

'Colonel Tulpanov,' I asked, 'are you sure that the Kremlin is aware of all these things? Do you think that Stalin and his entourage know what an irreparable blow this deals to the prestige of the Soviet Union and the Communist movement? I cannot believe they do. Who is there to tell the Kremlin about it? Those who are responsible are the last to dare to do so. For they would be likely to be shot as saboteurs.'

I offered to give Tulpanov a written report on all that I had told him, especially on the reaction in Germany to the problem of the prisoners of war. 'You must surely be in the position to see that the report reaches the proper quarters!' Tulpanov, with a resigned sigh, turned away. 'It is no good. Even Moscow will be unable to clean up this mess,' he said.

His wife and daughter interrupted. 'What has Einsiedel told you?' they asked. I had spoken for an hour without stopping

and I realised only now that Tulpanov, contrary to his habit, had spoken in German to me. He looked at me grimly and said shortly to his wife in Russian: 'Einsiedel says that the Germans have remained Fascists and that is why they hate us!'

With astonishment, I began to correct his statement. But he gave me a look that silenced me.

In silence we made our way back to town. Tulpanov got out at his office in Lichtenberg and left his car at my disposal to take me to the Western sector. But before leaving me he took me aside and put a hand on my shoulder.

'I thank you for your trust. If you have any difficulties—come to me. As long as you are with the *Rundschau* I can answer for you—as far as it is in my power to do so.'

I had another meeting about that time. I visited Herr Bechler. My anger with him had gradually waned and I was ready to attribute his behaviour on the Narev front, and his falsifications of the news, to his stupidity and irresponsibility rather than to malice. With another comrade from my prisoner-of-war days I went to Kleinmachnow, where Bechler, as Minister of the Interior of Brandenburg, lived. Two Russian police sentries stood at the door of his house. Quite near by, also in a villa, lived the Minister of Education, Fritz Rucker. He and his wife also came to see Bechler that evening. But it was no longer the Bechler I had known. It was not the rather limited but good-humoured comrade who blushed and did not know how to reply if he was addressed, who thought Tolstoy's novels were boring, who had once believed in Hitler and then discovered Communism, who knew the catechism of the Party by heart and since had followed it loyally and gallantly. The civil servant who now sat on the terrace of his villa, guzzling ham sandwiches, had become a cold careerist, a man with power, who spread fear and anxiety around himself, and laughed at his victims.

We did not have the opportunity to talk much about the events on the Narev front. We were busy with the present.

'Elections next year?' Bechler asked indignantly, while the mere thought made the timorous Rucker tremble with fear for his ministerial portfolio.

'We aren't that crazy, we won't just let power slip out of our hands. Collaboration with the bourgeois parties—how mad it makes me when I hear that! Typical middle-class opportunism! We give the orders and they obey. Dictatorship of the proletariat!'

'Is there no resistance, then?' I asked. 'Oh, of course they try to remonstrate,' Bechler continued, 'but the N.K.V.D. is usually better informed than I am. They certainly have those gentry taped. These smug little creatures don't deserve any better than to help dig their own graves. I can assure you I've learnt from the Russians how to deal with those cowardly swine.'

Yes, he had learnt that and a bit more. When he introduced his wife to me, I was confused. From his descriptions of her in prison I took her to be a modest little Gretchen. This woman was masculine in appearance and seemed to have learnt the Party jargon with her mother's milk. And now I learnt from him how this transformation had taken place. His wife had heard during the war from secret listeners-in to foreign stations that her husband was speaking on the Moscow wireless. She couldn't believe it. Her Bernard who had so deeply respected the Führen, how could he be capable of doing that? Never. Out of the question. There was something wrong there, she thought, and reported it—to be on the safe side of the police. A Communist official was arrested as a result. When the Red Army walked in, it was Mrs Bechler's turn to be arrested. She disappeared from the house a few days before Bechler returned. He tried to intervene, or at least to find out in which camp she was and what was her sentence. In vain. 'Your wife's case is so serious,' a high official in the N.K.V.D. told him, 'that we advise you not to interfere.'

'What could I do?' Bechler asked me. 'I declared her dead, and married again. My present wife is all right, an early Communist, politically enlightened. A good comrade, I can assure you.'

Bechler then spoke of other things. 'You know, in Potsdam, there was a whole safe full of money belonging to the Army lying all over the street. D'you think I picked up a single note? Not I, I was too foolish then.'

'Yes, yes,' I murmured, uncomfortably. He noticed it and began

in a way to apologise. 'Well, of course, I had no idea that we'd still be dealing in Reichsmarks. . . .'

'Still, you can't complain, you're doing well without it,' I could not help remarking, with an ironical glance at his large veranda and luxurious study.

'Oh, yes, I can't complain. But I need it you know. With all the responsibility one has, one can't do without a comfortable home, otherwise one wouldn't be able to stand it,' he said.

The wife of the Minister of Education, Mrs Rücker, looked up at her husband's colleague admiringly. A little earlier in the conversation we had been talking of the Russians and of how easy it was to get into trouble with them if one ventured upon the most well-meaning criticism, and I declared that one must nevertheless be bold and persevere because in the long run they might still listen to one. She had interrupted: 'It's all right for you, you have no family,' she said. 'But not you, Fritz. No nonsense from you, if you please!'

'Oh, I don't think there is any danger, Mrs Rücker,' I hastened to reassure her. 'Even in prison Fritz only showed determination when Ulbricht was far away. And now he has you at his side.' My irony did not get across. 'He certainly has,' the resolute woman agreed.

'A charming evening with the Ministers,' I thought to myself as I returned home. My dreams were troubled. I think I began to be afraid.

CHAPTER XII

In the Eastern Sector of Berlin

12th January, 1948

EVEN WHEN I was in prison, I found the Russian newspapers terribly boring. But it was only now that I was discovering how boring it was to work on a newspaper of the 'new type'. I had always thought of journalism as interesting work. I considered the journalist to be a man alive to all that was new, exceptional and important, and the newspaper a battlefield of ideas, a forum of criticism. There was nothing of that in the papers permitted in the Eastern Zone, and even less in the *Tägliche Rundschau*. To begin with, the work provided a certain excitement, but when I had got used to the new surroundings and the new people, the rattle of the printing machines and the atmosphere of Press conferences, I felt more and more depressed about it. The work ran in a deep rut, and consisted of turning out empty rhetoric quite unrelated to reality. We concentrated on endless recapitulation of Party dogmas, on a vulgar sublimation of the Soviet system, and on trying to soften the impact of the invectives which the Russians used in their articles. Our task consisted in a gross distortion of reality, with no consideration for the credulousness or healthy common sense of the reader. A straight perversion of the truth, without regard to credibility or to the readers' quotient of plain human understanding, such was 'the profession'.

Recently Karlshorst had issued a directive, according to which no parcels might be sent from the Eastern to the Western Zone. The German collaborators of the *Tägliche Rundschau* were tearing their hair out. What did this new move mean? Nobody wished to comment upon it. 'Nobody knew, or indeed had the least idea, how to justify this measure. Every sensible man was bound to see that it meant a new blow to the much-vaunted Ger-

man unity, and was bound to embitter the population all the more. The head of the department, Major Weisspapier, aware of our hesitations, jumped up from his seat at the editorial conference, and shrieked at us. He 'explained' that this was a blow to the saboteurs of the new order who imagined they could plunder the Eastern Zone by sending parcels to the Western Zone. This was really a way of uniting Germany, because now people would see how rich was the Eastern and how poor the Western Zone.

Even the Russian department heads seemed puzzled or looked away in embarrassment. The unfortunate man who was made to write such an exposition was inevitably the laughing stock of his colleagues. Very few had the courage, or were in a secure enough position, to refuse to obey such instructions. The true Communists consoled themselves with the slogans: 'The end justifies the means.' The cynic who once upon a time produced as good a paper for the German 'People's Party' as he did later for the Nazis, and then wrote for the *Tagliche Rundschau* as badly as was expected of him, thought only of the money that he could make out of it.

For a long time I avoided writing anything on topical matters. But that too was a fallacy. Articles on Marx's anniversary or the hundredth anniversary of the Communist manifesto, on Sacco and Vanzetti, or the history of the 1st of May, contained just as little original thought, and corresponded just as little to reality as all the others. One could not even use any argument, no matter how pro-Soviet it might be, if it deviated in any way from the official line. If the directive did not come from the Russian head of the department, then it came from his second in command, or from Colonel Kirsanov himself. For the Russians in Berlin were in an even greater predicament than we were. They seemed to be automatically suspected of Western tendencies. A crease in their trousers, a tie too conspicuously correct, a friendly relationship with a German comrade, a flirtation with a secretary, could be their undoing. How much more reason they had to fear to take the responsibility for an article that might provoke the disapproval of the boss, or that later on might serve as a proof of 'treachery'.

At the same time, no one seemed to know what the official line actually was. Yesterday, it might have been a crime to criticise the French attitude, let us say, on the Saar question. Today it was a duty to attack the shameful demands of French politicians and to revile them. The next day the same sort of article might be removed from the paper on an order from Karlshorst, even if it were already in type. The directives as to the contents of the newspapers came from an anonymous source, whose processes of thought were impossible to predict according to the laws either of logic or of reality.

The Russians were terrified of their own bosses. Four different controllers read the paper word for word before the chief editor saw it and passed it. Sometimes, several hours were spent in discussing a single word in an article, for fear lest it deviate from dogma.

My own chief, Captain Bernstein, normally a placid and sensible man, used to rush back to his room four or five times when he was on his way to the editor. He imagined that he had forgotten something. When you asked him what he was looking for he could not answer, but continued to run helter skelter, wiping the sweat from his forehead and finally he would knock at the editor's door as timorously as if he were searching for the fuse in an unexploded mine.

At last, the Russian editors, as a result of the permanent delays in bringing out the paper, began to wonder if things were going as they should. Our untiring and bitter criticisms of the crude and one-sided news items we received concerning life in the 'Workers' Paradise' finally made them think. They themselves, however, did not dare to suggest a change of line in Karlshorst. So instead they arranged a conference. The bright boys of the S.E.D. Press were invited to express their opinions. They were Becher, Abusch, Klaus Gysi, Hedda Zinner, Wolfgang Harich, Prof. Kuczynski, Kanterovitz and the General Secretary of the *Kulturbund*, Willmann.

For a whole hour they hummed and hawed over a clear statement. At last Becher threw himself into the battle. He could afford to be reprimanded by the Russians for being a nationalist.

This clever orator and negotiator was needed in the *Kulturbund*, which was supposed to be outside party politics. So he took the bull by the horns.

'Thousands of Germans have been in the Soviet Union,' he began. 'You cannot pull the wool over their eyes. The black spots, the backwardness they have seen must be explained, not denied. A Russian worker, who can only compare his existence with that of Tsarist times may be aware of the progress that has taken place. A German worker who sees prisoners return from Russia as skeletons, who sees the undisciplined, drunken and dirty Red Army men in his tramcars, is bound to ask himself what all this has in common with Socialism. The Soviet Union must be described truthfully, in its development and struggle against obstacles, against the indolence of the population, the technical backwardness, against bad crops and bad housing.'

After that the others became more courageous and bitterly criticised the work of the Russian journalists. The permanent employees of the *Tägliche Rundschau* listened in silence. They waged a small war in that direction every day and had long lost all hope of achieving anything. Captain Silbermann, the responsible leader, was certainly a dogmatic and aggressive fanatic. He could operate with great skill and subtlety within the limits set for him. But dare to follow Becher's suggestions, our suggestions, at a time when the Bolshevik Party had launched a campaign of unrestricted chauvinistic propaganda? That would be a suicidal step to take. Every word of respect for another country was now branded in the Soviet Union as evidence of a pro-Western tendency or as cosmopolitanism, and this made its author liable to punishment. Every invention, every discovery was claimed by the Soviets for the Russian people. And while the rest of the world was presented to the Russians as one vast poorhouse, as an incarnation of injustice and lack of freedom, the slightest and most unimportant event in the Soviet State was publicised and praised as the peak of all social, technical and cultural achievement.

The conference might as well never have taken place at all. Changes could only be made for the worse.

But it was typical of the strange situation in which we found

ourselves. To offer criticism at such a conference was not very dangerous, even if it earned a reprimand. But there were no means of personal contact with the Russians. If that were tried, they became more bigoted than *Pravda*. They were afraid of finding an N.K.V.D. spy in every German colleague. Therefore they replied to every critical remark with a defensive one and reproached the critics with deadly crimes. Major Weisspapier rushed at me with clenched fists, foaming at the mouth when I turned down an article full of abuse of André Gide, and refused to conceal my admiration for the writer.

'Gide? Gide is our deadly enemy. There is no place in the progressive world for this traitor,' he shouted at me.

When I refused to write about the return of the 500,000 Germans from the Soviet Union, maintaining that the Russians should take the consequences for their treatment of the prisoners of war, my Russian colleagues had no more doubts about my character.

'You seem to be very sure of yourself, Herr von Einsiedel, to make such a statement,' one of them said to me with a malicious smile.

'Is that a threat?' I asked.

'No, it isn't a threat. You know very well what I mean.'

At first I could not understand what he was getting at. Only after long reflection over this remark and its speaker (he was arrested, together with eight Russian editors, shortly after my departure from the *Rundschau*) did I realise its double meaning. Many of our Russian colleagues considered me, on account of my frank attitude in the matter of the prisoners of war, to be an N.K.V.D. informer.

Among all the Russians on the editorial board, Kirsanov was the most difficult to analyse. His spontaneousness, sincerity and generosity could charm, just as much as the sinister glance of his small eyes could inspire fear.

There was much that one could not help liking about the Russians. In the few frank conversations that one managed to have with them, when they forgot that they were civil servants and behaved like ordinary men, all the suspicions and doubts, the hesitations and uneasiness that overwhelmed one in their presence

seemed to vanish into thin air—until they once again took fright, remembered they were Soviet citizens, and began again to make a political issue out of the smallest trifle.

'Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler were discussing world supremacy in 1940'—I began to tell this old political anecdote one day at a gay and riotous party. 'Stalin declared he had it because he governed one of the largest countries; Mussolini pompously announced that world supremacy must come from Rome; then Hitler sprang up and shouted: "Have you read my speeches?"'

The Germans laughed. Some Russians laughed too. But the others pulled official faces and warned me:

'This is no joke, Comrade Einsiedel. Comrade Stalin never discussed world supremacy with Hitler, it is a Trotskyite slander.'

As I shook with laughter, the Russians took a more serious view of the situation.

'You are politically immature, Comrade Einsiedel. You spread hostile propaganda and imagine that you are telling harmless stories.'

The gay party became a pack of wolves who watched each other suspiciously and I soon slipped away so as not to witness unpleasant quarrels.

The editorial board reflected, in a small way, the jungle represented by the system. If you dared to utter an original idea, you had the 150 fanatics against you. If you stuck to the Party line, the hidden enemies of the Party and of Stalin's dictatorship—who under certain circumstances acted as the most rabid fanatics of all—would use every opportunity to draw the suspicion of the Party upon you. Friend and foe became indistinguishable. The teachings of a monolithic party had not produced unity among comrades in the struggle, but had unleashed a secret struggle of all against all.

20th February, 1948

I had been invited to a birthday party in West Berlin, but I was almost afraid to go. There were to be some Western journalists there, American and French. But also people with pro-Soviet

ideas. And that was where the risk lay. It was now some months since I had decided to take a free line and to see people irrespective of their political opinions or nationality. Had I not the right to do so? Must this give me a bad conscience? But a few weeks previously I had also been invited to a friend's house in the Western sector. There was a miscellaneous crowd from both West and East, Communists, Social-Democrats, Trotskyites and disciples of Sartre, and they had started an animated political discussion. Owing to the interest in my point of view, and my experiences as a prisoner of war, the whole conversation had centred on me and this had led me to become the protagonist of the Communist viewpoint.

I carried out my rôle in the best and sincerest way I could. I spared nothing and nobody and did not deny what was undeniable. I admitted that I, too, could vanish without trace tomorrow, thanks to a malicious denunciation, a misunderstood criticism, or a personal quarrel with a leading official. But as the opponents on the other side had nothing positive to offer save criticism of the inevitable results of a proletarian dictatorship, as they had found no way out of the chaos of the last decades and did not seem to believe themselves that the Western world had any future, my sincerity made an even stronger impression. At the end people did not laugh at the thought that a descendant of Bismarck might become a defender of Communism, but considered it a matter for earnest reflection.

As for myself, I was satisfied with the evening and returned to the Eastern sector, strengthened in my belief that I was on the right side of the barricade.

A few days later I was summoned to the presence of Colonel Kirsanov. In complete innocence I walked into his room. There was no Kirsanov but instead two Russians in mufti, with the faces that are common to all the secret police in the world. They enquired in a friendly way after my health, my state of mind. They wanted to know whether I had enough to eat and sufficient money. They asked me whether I was lonely, whether I intended to marry, and who my friends were. I had no reason to conceal my acquaintances and friends. It would only have aroused sus-

picion if I denied my friendship with people who must have been known to the supervising authorities. Slowly the questions of the commissars concentrated on my host of the other evening. What were his political views, they wanted to know. Who were his friends and what did they talk about in his house?

'Why don't you ask him yourselves? He works in the Central Office, is a staunch Communist, and will give you all the answers. I'm not an information bureau, after all,' I said.

'As a Party member, it is your duty to answer,' I was told.

'That is not mentioned in the rules of the Party to which I belong,' I replied.

'You know well the unwritten laws of the Party. Answer!'

'I wouldn't think of it!' I continued in the same vein. 'I'll reply only to questions that concern me. Also questions on general matters that may be of interest to the Party. But I refuse to play the spy on my friends.'

'Ah, but these questions concern you, Comrade Einsiedel.'

'What do you mean? Are you interrogating me?'

'You can call it that if you wish. Please tell us all that you said at your friend's party.'

'It would take a long time,' I tried to quibble. 'During a long discussion, I stated my political point of view, justified and explained it. And not too clumsily, in fact, rather effectively, it seems to me.'

'You made no anti-Soviet pronouncements?'

'Not as far as I know,' I replied flippantly.

'Didn't you say that the N.K.V.D. caused people to disappear? Tell the truth!'

'Certainly I said so. That is no lie and not an anti-Soviet pronouncement. Everybody knows it. But I both explained and justified it.'

'But you said that innocent people were arrested. Is that true?'

'I said that under the system there was no guarantee that only those who committed crimes against the law would be arrested. Anyway, that was the meaning of my words. And I tried to explain it.'

'Did you say that in the Eastern Zone there were concentration

camps, as in Hitler's time? Did you say that there were spies everywhere?'

'Yes. Unfortunately, I could hardly maintain the opposite, for fear of being laughed at.'

'Well, isn't that an anti-Soviet pronouncement?'

'I see no harm in stating facts. It depends on the twist one gives them.'

The commissar jumped up. 'You are an enemy, Comrade Einsiedel,' he cried. 'You speak as a warmonger. You lie. You are a traitor.'

I, too, lost my temper. 'I forbid you to speak to me like that,' I cried. 'I am not lying and I'm not a warmonger. This conversation, which I refuse to continue, proves how true was all that I said and how idiotic are your suspicions.'

In a rage, I jumped up and walked to the door. The Russian ran after me and seized me by the arm. I shook him off. 'Don't touch me,' I shouted at him. 'Do you wish to arrest me?'

It would not have surprised me at all if I had been arrested then and there. But I was determined to be firm to the end. If I were in danger, the only thing which could save me was a counter-attack.

The Russian drew back. I lost all my self-control and rushed at him with raised fists.

'I won't tolerate such treatment!' I shrieked so that the window panes shook. I had the impression that the whole house would soon be alerted.

The Russian's face, distorted with anger, suddenly changed. He smiled. He lifted his hands entreatingly. 'Calm yourself, do calm yourself. I didn't mean to offend you.'

'But you have offended me!' I retorted, and tears of rage came into my eyes. 'You must be crazy. If you are so stupid as not to realise that you can't use the same methods in Berlin as you do in Kazan, you should go and hide behind the Urals. Your spies are your worst enemies if they distort the words coming from your comrades' mouths. Before the whole world I defend methods which I abhor, I shut my eyes to things which I disapprove of, only because I believe in the great ultimate aim, and then you go

and abuse me, because you are too stupid to understand that one cannot push one's head through a wall, because your horizon is studded with Soviet stars. What do you think you're doing?'

The Russian did not listen to my angry words; he kept repeating in Russian: 'Calm yourself, calm yourself. Sit down and have a cigarette.' He handed me one. 'We know you are a staunch comrade. Nobody wants to do you any harm. But you must realise that we have to be careful. The enemy is strong. There are traitors and enemies everywhere.'

'But I'm not an enemy!' I started shouting again, banging my fist on the table. 'I won't allow suspicions of that sort.'

'Very well, calm yourself. Nobody suspects you. We know nothing but good about you. Forget all that I said. It was a mistake.'

The Russians let me go and behaved in a friendly fashion. I could say and do as I pleased, the commissar assured me, talk with and visit whom I liked. He was convinced of my loyalty. But nevertheless, ever since that day I felt afraid, afraid to go to the Western sector, afraid to invite anyone to my house, afraid even to telephone to Western Germany.

12th March, 1948

In Moscow I had often wondered why even such intelligent and erudite Communists as Friedrich Wolf, Alfred Kurella and Fritz Erpenbeck were so timorous in their descriptions of conditions in the Soviet Union. How completely Moscow refugees seemed to have forgotten what life in a Western country was really like! How hard they tried to support official propaganda statements, contrary to their better knowledge! But it was only here in Berlin that I learnt the terrible pressure which had produced that attitude. I learnt it from people who were still unconditional supporters of the Soviet, but did not belong to the élite of the Communist refugees and who spoke of the experiences in the Soviet Union with bitterness. When I took all their stories together there was only one conclusion to be drawn—that the destruction of revolutionary Communists, which was started by

Hitler in Germany, was finally completed in the Soviet Union. In fact, only a small group of the central committee members around Ulbricht, and the more prominent writers, were spared in the orgies of persecution that followed the 'purges' of the thirties.

For years, night after night, the patrols of the G.P.U. marched through the corridors of the Hôtel Lux, the Moscow residence of European refugees. Night after night the refugees lay awake in the horrible expectancy that the steps would come to their doors, that in the morning they would have disappeared and no news of them would penetrate the walls of their prisons to reach their comrades.

The men who told me this were themselves innocent victims of that terror. Some of them had spent as long as twelve years in prison, exile or concentration camps. Others had lost father, mother, brothers and sisters. They were sentenced to death or to forced labour for life, by the so-called *troikas*—tribunals of three men who pronounced their sentences without trial or enquiry, taking their evidence from dossiers without giving any opportunity for defence. A former pupil at the German school in Moscow told me that he once begged his father, a prominent official in the Italian sector of the Comintern, to intercede for three out of ten teachers who had been imprisoned and later vanished. It was impossible to believe that these old comrades could be traitors. His father had replied that no innocent man could be arrested in the Soviet Union. Six weeks later he himself fell a victim to the arrest mania. His son saw him for the last time guarded by two secret policemen with drawn pistols while he hurriedly packed the few things he was allowed to take with him to prison. He called out to his son the names of high Soviet officials whom he should ask to intercede on his behalf. 'I replied to my father,' his son told me, 'that no innocent man was arrested in the Soviet Union.' He had, however, done everything to try and help his father. But the high officials whom he asked to intercede in his father's favour were either arrested in their turn or seemed never to have heard of their old comrade in arms. He was never seen again. Only after

the war did the son learn from one of the lucky prisoners who had been released through one of those unpredictable chances which are characteristic of the machinery of terror, that his father had died of hunger after seven years in a labour camp. The son was still a fervent follower of Moscow and a loyal Party official. For him, as well as for other victims, all these things were 'mis-haps' that were unavoidable, just as in war when the artillery turns on its own lines.

'Does freedom exist?' I was asked by the son of one of the founders of the German Communist Party—Hugo Eberlein, who disappeared in Russia—a boy who had spent ten years in Siberian exile and was quite Russianised.

'There is no absolute freedom,' he replied himself. 'There is only a consciousness of certain necessities.' All this was the logical result of the point of view which I had supported in the discussion that displeased the N.K.V.D. so much. Quite nice, maybe in theory. But when one saw the people whom it affected, one was overcome with horror. What had it all to do with Communism?

Lenin said that the dictatorship of the proletariat recognises no laws but those which it has set for itself. But he certainly took it for granted that these laws would be established on the basis of democratic freedom, at least for the working class, that is, for the majority of the population. Yes, back in 1905 he stated clearly that socialisation without democratisation would lead to sinister abstract results. Were we now facing these results? Must one not admit that the Party State with its N.K.V.D. apparatus did not itself abide by the laws which it issued arbitrarily and without the approval of any controlling authority? We were defenceless in the hands of a more or less anonymous group of high officials who coerced millions of Communists throughout the world, submitting them in the Soviet Union to the terror of its secret service and, where the latter's arm did not reach, to the lowest police methods of the enemy class. We dared not discuss even the desirability of this or that tax, the rates of delivery for agricultural produce, or the institution of football pools. So how could a Party member, who did not belong to the small Kremlin group, expres-

his views on any political matter, such as the German-Polish frontier, the resettlement of millions of people, the relationship with social democracy or the attitude to the Marshall Plan? We had to carry out orders issued by authorities, whom we did not know.

(I should like to see the comrade who could answer this question: where are the decisions of the Party really made? In the Politbureau of the Bolshevik Party? Perhaps. But where is the Politbureau? When, where, and under what auspices was it elected? Were its members free to make their decisions and to carry out their functions or were they just as afraid of the secret police as we were? Who had the last word to say—Stalin or a clique around him, or Beria or some totally unknown comrade like Ivanoff, pushed into the Politbureau by the N.K.V.D.?)

. 'Consciousness of necessity.' Very well, I was prepared to accept that one must agree whether to drive on the right or on the left, and consciousness of this necessity helps to achieve a greater freedom in traffic. A criminal may realise that he must confess to his crime and give himself up to the police. Yes, perhaps one may even realise that it may be necessary to suffer great injustice from the State, if one does not want to become a Michael Kohlhaas straight away.

But what had become of the revolutionary élite, which, like Michael Kohlhaas, led a war against the existing order in the name of justice for all, and established the Dictatorship of the Proletariat which was to realise this universal justice? It had exhausted itself in internal struggles. It had, to a great extent, become the victim of the grotesque justice of its own State. A group of men lusting after power had succeeded: the revolutionaries, a group that claimed alone to possess the blessed truth according to which the paradise on earth was to be established. In the name of this truth it demanded the subjection of all men on whom it wished to force happiness, even against their will. It could only keep its power through terror and extend it through force. It promised to realise Communism and for this reason it was necessary to accept this concentration of unlimited power and its unscrupulous use.

When a free Communist society would hatch free individuals out of the hard shell of dictatorship, the gods alone knew. Perhaps after five or ten generations, when, like animals born in a zoo, they would have forgotten what freedom is, when they would be so devoid of any demands, especially spiritual demands, that they would, in fact, be able to live according to the Communist slogan: 'Every man should work according to his capacity and be paid according to his needs.'

5th April, 1948

I asked for leave to go to Western Germany, but the *Tägliche Rundschau* looked unfavourably upon this. 'They' had fears for my safety. The N.K.V.D. raised its voice again. I was summoned to the Buschallee in Weissensee at 8 p.m. At a dark corner of the street a commissar was waiting for me and took me along devious routes to a small villa. There, during a dinner at which the vodka was plentiful, he asked me to give him reports on the foreigners whom I saw frequently. I was to sign a statement that I was willing to work for the Soviet Information Service and not to mention this to anyone. The next day a large parcel of food was brought to my house: butter, herrings, a bag of barley, a bag of sugar and a huge piece of meat that stank so terribly that I threw it at once into the dustbin.

In a fortnight I was again to go to Weissensee and make a written report on what I had found out in the interval.

Well, I was prepared to play the game; I would give them a few unimportant bits of information. Quite by chance I had discovered that the N.K.V.D. could help me get to Western Germany. Out of fear that my demand for leave to go to Western Germany might be misinterpreted, I myself told the N.K.V.D. commissar about it. To my astonishment he was quite pleased.

'Go and give us a report on what you see. Try to talk to former officers and find out about the rearman's plans there.'

It was really a joke that I should be helped by the N.K.V.D. to go where I would once more be able to breathe freely. And there was nothing I needed more. I had to talk once more to

people without feeling that it was necessary to weigh every word, to people whom I did not need to suspect, and to be free of the fear and hypocrisy which never left us here.

22nd May, 1948

There were limits even to the power of the N.K.V.D. I still had not received my permit for inter-zonal travel. But at least leave was granted by the *Tägliche Rundschau*. Altogether, I was very much *persona grata* again on the newspaper. I was one of the three German collaborators invited as guests of honour to the anniversary of the Soviet Press in the Press Club at Weissensee. And at the third anniversary of the *Tägliche Rundschau*, Colonel Kirsanov sang my praises in his speech in the House of Soviet Culture in the presence of the 'Heads of the Party and of the Army', pointing out my 'exemplary efforts in the cause of the People'. If one wished to make a career, one had apparently merely to give one's little finger to the N.K.V.D.

As I was opening the quadrille with the colonel's wife at this celebration, a young Russian officer invited me to come out to one of the tables laid in the garden. He was the same young lieutenant, now a captain, who had interrogated me at Stalingrad. Tulpanov had told me, in the Ukraine in 1943, that he had been killed. I was delighted to see him alive. But at the very start of our conversation he asked me in a surreptitious way to act as a spy for him.

'If you have the courage,' he said, 'come and see me in Potsdam.'

I gave my journey to the West as a pretext not to go.

'Very well, I'll see about it when you come back,' he told me as he said good bye.

When I came back? I shivered at the thought, yet I could not make up my mind to go without the thought of return. With what enthusiasm had I embraced the idea of Communism! What security and assurance it had given me! How clear and simple the future had looked, in spite of the hardships, the destruction, the blows, the injustice! Was *all* that an illusion? An over-simplified

solution? I felt only anger and sorrow when I thought of the stupidity, the clumsiness, the suspicion and the ruthlessness which poisoned everything, which artificially created enemies upon whom the eternal conspirators could then vent their mania for persecution. Vainly I racked my brain to understand what was going on in the heads of the people around me. I did not mean just Ulbricht or Pieck, the unscrupulous careerists and corrupt elements. There were others after all. Ackermann, Friedrich Wolf, Erpenbeck, Kantorovitz, Bredel and some of the friends and comrades from prison. They were not all fools or cynics. Were they not aware that the denouncer, the informer, the spy, the opportunist, the criminal, had the upper hand? Did they not see it or did they not want to see it? Or was it all necessary, after all? Perhaps it seemed to them the only way to establish a new, a better order, which would be fair to all men and would reorganise methods of production? Perhaps I was, in fact, too 'soft', too sentimental, too 'bourgeois' as they so prettily call it in the Party jargon, to be on the side of the revolution. How many times had I repeated to myself that a pistol in the hands of a policeman was different from one in the hand of a criminal? How many times had I enumerated all the crimes and terrors committed by the other side—the coffee burnt in Brazil, the potatoes destroyed in America, the bombardment of Dresden, the theft of patents and the armament profits? And yet, I could not believe that with such 'dialectics' one could justify Soviet methods. A swine remained a swine even if he were a S.E.D. Minister and assisted the cause of progress. Dialectics had to be based on reality or else they became sophistry—this sentence of Lenin's seemed to have been quite forgotten.

3rd October, 1948

For four months I had been sitting in solitary confinement and could do nothing but concentrate on myself. On May 24th, by the train which travelled between the zones, I had arrived at Frankfurt-am-Main and, after registering with the police, drove out quickly in a cab to the Bockenheimerlandstrasse, where a friend

had invited me to his villa. The next day I went to see my mother in Wiesbaden. We had arranged to meet in the Taunus Hotel. As we were leaving, a hand came down on my shoulder.

'You are Count Einsiedel?' Two officials of the U.S. War Department wished to see my papers. Unfortunately they could not examine them on the spot. They asked me to follow them to their office. On the terrace of a villa we waited for a long time for a specialist on documents. We were offered sandwiches and drinks. One of the officials proudly exhibited a photograph of myself, which he carefully carried in his pocket. Then it turned out that I had to go with them to another, more important office. They suggested that we should arrange where my mother could meet me in half an hour, and a car drove me away from Wiesbaden.

In Oberursel the gates of the house of detention of the American Military Government were flung open at the sound of our horn. Without any explanation, and despite all my objections, I was thrown into a cell. Days and weeks went by. I was completely cut off from the outer world. No interrogation, no reply to my protests, spoken or written.

In vain did I refer to the law of *habeas corpus* recently publicised all over Germany. I started a hunger strike when I learned through the newspaper that my imprisonment was known in Berlin. But what could the hunger strike of one individual achieve? They would only resort to forcible feeding? After eighteen days, when I could hardly raise myself from my camp bed, I gave up.

In the large barracks, with hundreds of cells, there were only a few prisoners—a few S.S. officers, with whom I had once a chance to speak, and a few suspicious characters whom I watched through my secretly opened window as they trudged in single file on their daily walk. At last, after three months I was interrogated for the first time.

'What are you going to do when we set you free?' an American officer asked me.

'Continue my leave and then return to Berlin,' I replied.

'Do you imagine that we shall release you in order that you

can go back to the *Tägliche Rundschau* and write atrocity stories about us?' he said.

'All I need to do is to write the truth; that should be enough to embarrass you,' I replied.

'We won't make things easy for you if you go on being as stubborn as that. Give us a written statement that you have fled from the Russian Zone. Then we'll release you. If you need time for reflection we can transfer you to a better place where we can put people at your disposal who may be able to throw some new light on Communism for you.'

I shrugged my shoulders. 'I need no time for reflection. I insist on my immediate release.'

'That's your last word?'

'Yes.'

'Think it over.'

I did not reply. The officer got up in a rage.

'Your last word?' he asked once more, very sharply.

I suddenly had to laugh. Savchik's frog-like eyes seemed to appear before me.

'There are trains that go to the east, too. Herr von Einsiedel!'

Yes, that was a real threat at the time. But this American officer would have burnt his fingers badly if he had laid hands on me.

I watched the American leave my cell, deep in thought. Would I have been as 'brave' as that with a N.K.V.D. man in Buchenwald? No, even here in Oberursel, the very thought of such a possibility filled me with terror.

A few days later I was taken to the detention house at Frankfurt-am-Main, under the escort of two armed civilians. On the so called expiration of a warrant of arrest that should have been, according to the law, executed twenty-four hours after the arrest, I was handed a bill of indictment. 'In possession of false papers, and espionage.'

The trial was fixed for September 10th. Only three days before that date the lawyer appointed by the court for my defence was allowed to come and see me. The trial was not public. A few minutes before it took place, the twenty-one-year-old lawyer for the prosecution before the American Military Court, a German

law student in his third year, tried to blackmail me: if I pleaded guilty on the first indictment, they would overlook the second. The judge dropped the second indictment even without my agreeing to this 'proposal'. An official of the American Military Government swore that my papers were false. In vain I pointed out to the judge that they had been issued legally by a Berlin solicitor recognised by all the four Occupation Authorities. At midday there was an interval. I learnt privately that my sentence would be six months' imprisonment. Two hours later the judge pronounced the sentence with lowered eyes: my information had been correct.

I waited four weeks for the outcome of my application for an appeal. The records proving the authenticity of my identity papers had arrived from Berlin. It could only be a matter of days now until I was released.

I had never ceased wondering why the Americans arrested me. If they really had suspected me of working for the N.K.V.D. why did they not have me shadowed for a while so that they could have proved it? Why did they never question me in that connection? Why now, instead, this rather clumsy attempt at blackmail and this travesty of a trial?

Actually this comedy did not provoke any ill feeling in me. Although they did not know it and could not prove it—I was, in point of fact, a secret agent of the N.K.V.D. While on leave, God knows, I had something better to do than to spy on former Army officers and on fanciful schemes for the remilitarisation of Germany. But how many tourists and holiday makers from the Eastern Zone were likely to collect information for the N.K.V.D.? Out of a hundred people in the Eastern Zone who may have been granted an inter-zone passport, some eighty would surely have had orders to act as spies. During my own captivity, anyone who had ever paid a visit to a foreign country was suspected by the Soviets of having been engaged in espionage. They just could not help thinking this way, since every person who left their country was automatically enlisted as a spy.

No, I did not bear the Americans a grudge, however endless the time I passed in solitary confinement seemed. But still, heavier than ever, the question weighed on my mind as to what decision I should make about returning to Berlin. The Tito affair had been my last shock. When Tulpanov, six years ago, had asked what I knew about Karl Marx, I had felt ashamed that I could not give him an answer. But that was nothing compared with the embarrassment I felt when, at Oberursel, the Americans asked my opinion of the conflict between Tito and the Kremlin! Not until they thrust newspapers from the Eastern Zone under my nose did I believe that such a conflict really existed.

Only a few months previously two special correspondents of the *Tägliche Rundschau* had returned from the much-praised People's Democracy of Yugo-Slavia. Only a few weeks previously the newspaper had published the last instalment of a series of articles on this model Socialist country, the full report in book form was to be issued soon. Since the end of the war, Soviet Communist propaganda had not tired of praising Tito's government as the prototype of the new democracy.

But overnight the propaganda magicians of the Kremlin transformed a State system of typically Soviet stamp into a Fascist State, and rulers who had figured as the most popular heroes of world Communism became Fascist reptiles and traitors. Without the slightest expert knowledge, without even so much as studying the facts, without even taking the trouble to do a little thinking, the Communist Parties of all countries tamely followed suit. *Pravda* no longer saw any difference between Fascism and Communism except whether or not a government would dance to Moscow's tune, whether it would put up with a Soviet Secret Police controlling its country or whether it preferred to establish a political system of its own. No wonder, therefore, that I, too, found it difficult to discover any.

'A question which must be judged from a dialectical point of view.' Under this cliché the war which the English and French fought against Hitler became nothing but a skilfully camouflaged co-operation with him, and the Stalin-Hitler pact, which gave the latter a chance of permanently dominating Europe, the

Mediterranean and Asia Minor, became an act of anti-Fascist heroism.

'The end justifies the means.' From this half-truth they claimed the right to raise to heaven as a martyr any Communist who had been under arrest for a few days, while on the other side tens of thousands of innocent people disappeared without trace.

'Liberation of the individual from exploitation, want and ignorance.' In the name of this propaganda theme, millions of individuals were subjected to the power of a small minority of drilled, fanatical and callous Party officials, were isolated from any intellectual exchange, and were forced into working conditions which, in their disregard for social rights, were probably unique in 'history'.

'Development of the creative powers of the people.' Yes, there was a great poet, Mayakovski, who, in his work, appealed to the planning commission to determine the poet's output, and who pledged himself to stifle the song in his own throat in order to devote his art to Socialist plumbing. He ended by committing suicide.' The lesser poets of the 'Soviet epoch', however, managed to do what the great man did not; they adapted their personalities to the rules of the planning commission and the Party orders, placed their great gifts at the service of a lying propaganda which strangled all genuine sentiment, all true expression and all ability derived from experience, in a mesh of tactical expediency and ideological dogma. Films, worse than any trash produced in the world in the last thirty years, were labelled as masterpieces of 'social realism'. Novels which received the Stalin prize were rewritten to order. Posters representing the happy and victorious Soviet citizen showed him in shorts and sport shirt. Then it was decided that he would be better without them. When this was done it was decided to put them on again, and so it could go on sometimes for months, while the 'artist' received 14,000 roubles a month, whereas a workman barely received 40. Gorki's complete works were published in splendid editions, translated into German with the author's head engraved on the binding, and in less than three weeks the whole edition was suppressed, because a flattering

remark of Lenin's about Trotsky, which Gorki quoted, had passed unnoticed. In the Moscow libraries the works of Traven and other 'progressive' writers, who did not absolutely toe the Party line, were blotted out page by page by the censor because they contained criticism of the Soviet Union; and Plievier's *Stalingrad* was not printed because it would reveal the totally fabricated Stalingrad myth of Soviet propaganda, because the Russian people would learn from this book what the enemy was really like, would learn that the three hundred tanks that attacked the tractor factory and were repulsed by a small infantry detachment were not really German tanks, but that the balance of forces was in reality precisely the opposite way about. It was apparently genuinely believed that it was possible to eradicate works like *The Awakening of Adam* or *Strasburg Cathedral* or the *Pathétique* through Party orders, and to regulate the spiritual, psychological and religious demands of man according to so-called 'social necessity'.

I was more and more preoccupied with the question of what could actually be the source of such a fantastic disregard for human conscience, for truth, for life; of how it was possible that the Socialist movement in its Communist aspect could have degenerated so far and achieved precisely the opposite of what it had meant to achieve, that is, the freedom of men from the rule of money and power, and the mastery over matter, technique and organisation?

How was it possible that people whose ideals were reason, logic, mathematics and necessity, had come to worship pictures of Stalin and listen to the platitudes and utterances of their Party Press with more fear than a primitive tribe would feel for the machinations of a witch doctor?

A few weeks ago, I had still tried to find the explanation in external circumstances—for instance, in the fact that the revolution in Russia was a premature birth and had been distorted by the extreme measures that had to be employed to promote its growth. Marx had said that one system of society could only be supplanted by another when the possibilities of development of its production capacities had been exhausted. And that was not the case in the

Russia of 1917. I regretted that Lenin had died so early. His knowledge of Europe and of the international Labour movement would, I believe, have made him avoid the sinister mistakes that the Third International made under the leadership of Stalin. But who could say whether the master, Lenin, would not have been destroyed by his own creation in the same way as his leading disciples, Bucharin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kirov, Tukhatchevsky and the rest who, as revolutionaries and independent personalities, could never make peace with the teachings of Stalin's monolithic Party? I became more and more convinced that the roots of the evil lay much deeper. If it were truly the case that man was merely a creature of economic conditions, the highest form of development of organic albumen; if the mystery of life could be explained scientifically, the soul proved to be a mere sentimental definition of class consciousness, conscience a mere parson's invention which could be replaced by the verdict of the Party, then it would be right to rate utility higher than the moral law, and for reasons of expediency let men perish by the million, or use them for forced labour. After all, man slaughters sheep and harnesses oxen under the yoke.

Now, it was precisely this apparently scientific materialistic interpretation of men and history, which had once fascinated me so much, that appeared to me to be the cause of the degeneration of the system, in that the truths which a materialistic conception of history contain were given such absolute value in the Soviet Union.

It is not sufficient to nationalise the means of production and to distribute social products according to plan. These measures would perhaps achieve their aim if they sprang from man's free will, from his conscience and his moral maturity. But when they are imposed upon men by force they are just as valueless as the avoidance of murder through fear of punishment.

For hours, for days, for months, I walked up and down my cell, tormented by these ideas. And when I made this discovery, which is probably as old as the Bible, I felt like a shipwrecked man who has discovered land. For it was in it that I believe that I found the reason why the road chosen by the Soviet Union can never lead

to freedom and justice, or to Communism. The Soviet authorities will never abandon terror and force, will never be able to risk allowing freedom of conscience, even if one assumes that such is their intention or imagines that Soviet society might become a model for a Socialist way of life. The force with which this régime is imposed has no educational value, it can never produce the moral maturity which is needed for community life in the Communist pattern. When there is no more choice between good and evil, right and wrong, justice or injustice, these ideas lose their meaning. Even if it lasted for centuries, this forcibly imposed way of life could only produce a human herd which would perform social functions without knowing why, an ant State, governed by an individual in the Kremlin and dependent upon him, doomed to decline as soon as the individual existed no more, like a hive of termites deprived of its queen.

For here is another Communist slogan: whoever seeks to destroy evil, may also destroy good. Who kills the devil, may kill God as well.

In this way the conscience of the revolution has been destroyed by the thousands of revolutionary Bolsheviks who have fallen victims to 'purges', and its spiritual aims have degenerated as a result of the methods which have been used to prolong it. The men in power who intended to exterminate exploiters and war-mongers, to ban all fear and injustice from the world, were inspired by the same instincts as those whom they accused: ambition, suspicion, envy and fear. How could it be otherwise? How could so small a minority as that represented by the Communists deprive millions of their freedom while retaining their own? That would be impossible even if this minority were defending a truth. A Party which oppresses other parties is not free itself. It is only a distortion of a Marxist slogan concerning the freedom of nations. How could the men in the Kremlin who have 'liquidated' millions of their real and imaginary enemies, disciples, comrades and friends, be free of fear, of mistrust? How could a Party whose members are told: you have no conscience, your conscience is the order given by the Party; you need not think, the Party will think for you; you must

not criticise, but use self-criticism on the lines of the Party—how could such a Party, or its members, develop any further, improve spiritually and morally, recognise truth, and practise justice?

The great attraction which Communism can still hold lies perhaps in the critical truths of Marxism, to which it always refers in its propaganda. But the truth of the theoretical part of the programme does not extend to its positive aims. This is another of those wrong conclusions of which I, too, had been guilty. The biggest lie of Communism is the assertion that it is the absolute truth and thence the inference that it has the right to inflict its programme on the world.

Once again I asked myself: Who then were these men who pretend to possess the wisdom of God? 'We had better not rely on some higher being, nor God, nor the Kaiser, nor a Tribunal to save us. . . .' Who would not want to join in the rousing call of these self-assured and forceful words? And yet it may be their lack of humility which has produced the grotesque situation in which, today, men march by Lenin's tomb singing the 'Internationale', carrying on their banners the portraits of dictators in the place of ikons. I can hear the mocking, indignant cries of the 'comrades' at the mention of such thoughts: 'Look at the hypocrite preaching humility, modesty, submission to the power of the exploiter—opium for the people.'

Nevertheless I feel that I am touching here upon the kernel of the whole problem. Their whole system is condemned not because of nationalisation or collectivisation, or the liquidation of private enterprise even if they impose it by force; their guilt lies in the claim that they attribute absolute truth to all their methods, that they pretend to have solved the mystery of life, that they deny the existence of the world beyond the senses, and force people to behave against the laws that are given unto each of us. They wish to force the powerful stream of life into the narrow channel of their ridiculous theory and mould history according to their system. They wish to conquer the world and eternalise their supremacy. Therein lies their terrible presumption.

For this reason they proceed to dethrone the gods and turn into

an idol the N.K.V.D. commissar who rules over life and death, though he, in his turn, is a mere frightened idolator who will be destroyed tomorrow by one of his superiors. They have abandoned the rule of the intellect and grope miserably in the mystical jungle of their dialectic.

What roundabout ways I had to follow, in order to understand these simple things! Only here, in the Frankfurt prison, did I realise that there is no better comparison for the Soviet system than prison itself. People are divided into prisoners, warders, inspectors, directors. There are no crises, but there is no spiritual or economic competition. The directors determine the work, the food, the punishments and rewards, the reading material and the prayers. But what may still have a meaning here in prison, because it represents only one small aspect of life within a free community, because the director depends upon written and unwritten laws, because there is a possibility of defence and a hope for freedom, becomes meaningless in the Soviet system, which exists only for its own sake and leaves man no hope of salvation. An unemployed tramp might find a solution to his problems by getting himself into prison for some small misdemeanour and thus be able to snap his fingers at the inclemency of the weather. But when a whole people, the whole of mankind, in fact, submits to a prison régime for the sake of apparent security and freedom from crimes, then it is sheer insanity. This is the path which the Russian revolution has now taken. Yes, I feel that I have to make a decision—one way or the other.

7th December, 1948

In the middle of October I was released. In the middle of November there was a retrial before an American Military Government Court. The prosecutor did not put forward an indictment. By this means, through a legal device, he avoided a clear acquittal.

Then I went back to Berlin. I had not yet found the courage to break with that world, yet to return to it needed a dreadful effort on my part. But though I said to myself that it was improb-

able that I would remain in the Communist camp much longer, I wanted to put myself once more to the test. I did not wish to avoid the conversations with those among my Communist friends who had followed the same road as myself and whom I trusted not to betray me even if they disapproved of my resolution to break with the Party. I also wanted to make it quite clear that I thoroughly disapproved of the behaviour of the Americans towards me. For though they had not harmed me in any way and though their methods could not be compared with those of the N.K.V.D., they could not be called correct.

My colleagues and comrades of the *Tägliche Rundschau* soon realised that a change had come over me. I was asked on the very evening of my arrival:

'What is the matter? You have altered completely.'

The report I made at a Press conference on my arrest and sentence had not been 'severe' enough, and much too objective for them. Their long-winded advice to overcome my 'modesty' and as a 'victim of the American Secret Service' proceed to 'tear the mask' off Western imperialism, revealed the suspicion awakened by my unconcealed reluctance to let myself be used for their propaganda. My decision could not be put off much longer. Either I had to capitulate completely or break with the Party.

So I packed my suitcase and left Berlin and the Eastern Zone. In two letters, one to Colonel Kirsanov and one to the secretary of the Social Unity Party, I gave notice to the *Tägliche Rundschau* and resigned from the Social Unity Party.

25th April, 1949

The central organ of the Social Unity Party forwarded me a letter saying that though I had been a genuine anti-Fascist, yet 'as an impoverished nobleman I remained a petty bourgeois who, as soon as the class war became acute, wrung my hands in despair, began to waver, and finally ran over to the other camp'. Even if the 'New Germany' was right, and I was only a sentimental bourgeois, I considered it more honest and worthy to admit it, instead of hanging on to the Party line and artificially building up

in myself an inner resistance which would only cause me to be disloyal because I would not be able to live up to it.

When I asked myself about the inner reasons which had caused my break with the Party, I also had to ask myself why I ever joined it. In the weeks before I took the decision which led to the outburst on the part of the 'New Germany', a group of former members of the National Committee who had been released from prison arrived in Germany. They had undergone a special course in the Krasnogorsk Camp before their return. High Soviet officials instructed them in groups of seven on their political mission in Germany, the formation of a National-Democratic Party in the Eastern Zone. Special commissars of the N.K.V.D. examined every one of them on their readiness and zeal for collaboration with the Soviet secret police. Once more ideological infiltration, coercion and corruption marched hand in hand. Those who did not submit to the offer of high posts and money bribes were threatened with punishment for imaginary war crimes. Those who remained firm were sent back to the camps to face an unknown fate at the hands of the Soviet legal machine. Those who were sent back, with a few exceptions, only returned in April 1950, after having been tried or having waited for trial for many months in prison. The most fanatical Communists, such as Vincent Müller, Heinrich Homann and Arno von Lenski, were chosen to form a Politbureau of the N.D.P., together with the one-time refugee, and now a Soviet citizen, Dr Lothar Bolz, a Politbureau which served at the same time as point of contact for the representatives of the N.K.V.D. sent to Western Germany. The fellow travellers, Egbert von Frankenberg, Colonel Adam, Colonel Ludwig, and many others, were given smaller posts in this branch of the Social Unity Party. Other officers and generals filled the ranks of the People's Police.

All these men, as well as the friends with whom I discussed my break with the Party in Berlin, believed that they were on the winning side. The fall of Peking, the *putsch* in Prague, were events which filled them with enthusiasm. What represented

a new job and security for the fellow travellers among them, for the active workers, meant a sense of power and the possibility of using this power. In the turmoil of the German collapse, as viewed from a Soviet prison, the victory of Communism seemed for many of them inevitable. Reared in the atmosphere of power politics, they regarded the link with the Soviet bloc as the only way for Germany to recapture her position as a great power, and in their opinion to play a leading part in a union of Soviet States owing to her technical superiority.

The hope of finding themselves in power exercised a special attraction for the most active and determined amongst them. They rationalised their personal ambition as a desire to join in the universal struggle (which, according to Bolshevik dogma, must end with the inevitable victory of Communism), to play the part of the hammer rather than that of the anvil. There was no doubt that a mixture of misunderstood patriotism, misguided progressiveness, ambition and more or less unconscious opportunism played an important part in our decision in favour of Communism. But this does not explain altogether why we fell such easy victims to Bolshevik ideology. It was much more the fear of 'not being able to believe in anything any more', the fear that overcomes people in a period of chaos, the desire to find a psychological refuge in a highly disciplined collective society which made us cling to the Bolshevik Party dogma and to the theory of class war, as to a lifebelt. In this world emerging from disaster, and empty of faith, the desire to suppress fear by a cult of power—that was the temptation to which we fell. For this reason it could be said that acceptance of the Soviets was far more evidence of psychological cowardice, weakness and bourgeois hesitation, than any break with them.

7th August, 1950

If success is the measure in power politics, then the unscrupulous theorists of terror in the Communist camp may well appear stronger than those inhibited defenders of freedom of conscience and the spirit, who are torn with doubts and moral scruples.

Who can deny that large numbers of people in the Western world float aimlessly between the extremes of a ridiculous underestimation of the enemy and a panic, between the desire of a preventive war and open defeatism? But is the Soviet danger, with its fifth column all over the world, really as great as the spread of Communism since Stalingrad inclines one to think? The military victory over Hitler undoubtedly meant the end of a series of crises that threatened the existence of the Soviet Union from its very beginning; civil war and intervention, riots, hunger, economic chaos, a split in the Comintern, inter-Party strife, military opposition and finally the attack of National Socialism—these were to a great part the direct results of Stalin's personal ambition, and of the abandonment, under his influence, of the principles of revolutionary internationalism and of democracy within the Party. They characterise the long process during which the dictatorship of an intellectual élite *for* the proletariat, was replaced by the dictatorship of a terrorist group, personified in Stalin, *over* the proletariat. It was Hitler himself who gave the final decisive help to Stalin in this process. His attack on 'Holy Mother Russia' brought results which no Bolshevik propaganda could have achieved—the poor morale of the Red Army at the beginning of the war was proof enough of that—it made Stalin a national hero in the eyes of the Russian people. If the first stage of the war, the offensive up to the Volga and the Terek carried out by the German Army against superior forces, revealed how sterile and empty Stalin's dictatorship really was, and what an abyss separated it from the people it nevertheless helped the Stalinites to build a bridge over the abyss. It was the Nazi commissars, the S.S. commandos, and the greed of Rosenberg and Ribbentrop which drove the Russian people into Stalin's arms. The feeble attempts linked with the name of Vlassov, which were made by generals and by the German Foreign Office to give the offensive the character of an act of liberation, did not alter this fact. They were, in their lack of sincerity, only paralleled by the Nation.¹ Committee on the other side, and, like the latter, hampered by the terror which the State Party exercised against the prisoners and the population of the country that was to be 'liberated'. Thus the chance to overthrow

Stalin's régime was missed politically. In the military sphere alone Germany could not achieve victory—that was simply beyond her power.

This does not mean, however, that the thesis often repeated at the beginning of the war—that in this motorised era Russian distances lost their value as a weapon—was an absolutely false one. Nobody knows this better than Stalin himself, who described the attack of the German Army, though undertaken with inferior strength, as nearly fatal to the Soviet Union. If the German Army could reach Stalingrad then it is clear the Soviet Armies would be defeated by any force equal in numbers to the Soviet Army, better supplied with guns and other material than the German Army had been, and able to draw on the technical superiority of the Western world even though the Russians should withdraw behind the Urals. The value of space as compared with the strength and striking power of the internal combustion engine becomes more and more restricted. The aggressiveness of Soviet policy since Potsdam seems to prove that the masters in the Kremlin do not see this, and believe themselves to be very strong. But every psychiatrist will admit that people suffering from fear and inferiority complexes always tend to be aggressive. This is the real explanation of the aggressive attitude of the Soviet. Every analysis of official and unofficial State propaganda must come to the conclusion that its initiators are hard pressed to fill their citizens with courage and to convince them of their strength.

Now here lurks a very real danger. No one can guarantee that one day the leading officials of this régime will not succumb to their own propaganda. No one can guarantee that they won't suddenly launch a flight away from the sterility of their own organisation towards more tempting conquests abroad, the opportunity for which always exists in totalitarian States, by means of a surprise attack.

This danger will become particularly great if they succeed in causing panic in the free world through their pretence of being all-powerful. No one can deny that they have achieved a fair measure of success in this field already.

They are helped, too, in their attempts at intimidation by two

factors. The first is the considerable over-estimation, especially by the Western Allies, of the military achievement of the Soviet counter-offensive from Stalingrad to Berlin. It is all too easily forgotten by both East and West that this offensive was directed against an already defeated opponent who was only able to oppose the Soviet hordes with a fraction of his reserves and weapons. In spite of this the Soviet Army only forced back the Wehrmacht but did not destroy it. And owing to the clumsiness of strategic planning, the lethargic leadership at the middle and lower levels, and the lack of initiative in all ranks, the cost in bloodshed of this advance was disproportionately high.

Even the battles of annihilation which the Red Army succeeded in winning were in no instance, even in the case of Stalingrad, due to their initiative. Rather, they were handed to them by Hitler through his negligence of the most elementary laws of strategy. In the areas where the insane corporal did not meddle, similar threats were successfully met by ordinary general staff officers through tactical and strategic moves of an evasive character. These facts cannot be dismissed merely on the grounds that the person who recites them intends to create a new legend about the invincibility of the German Army. The German Wehrmacht was defeated because it took on impossible tasks ordered by its political leaders, and in trying to carry them out had to suffer, in addition, the interference of an amateur.

These facts must be taken into account if a correct appreciation of the achievement of the victors is to be made. Generals always like to have conquered as strong an opponent as possible.

Nor do the Western countries like to recall how much they were hoodwinked by Hitler in the years 1939-40, and how long they hesitated before they engaged an already weakened enemy in a decisive hand-to-hand battle on a second front. For it was this hesitation that gave the Red Army time to sweep on to the Elbe. In this respect Herr Heristadt is quite right in his cynical analysis of the political and military situation after 20th July, 1944.

The second factor that helps the Soviet pretence of power is that the democracies are perforce always demonstrating their own weakness. Every dollar intended for rearmament can only be

extracted from the taxpayer and the politician after endless debates. This may be fortunate, as otherwise the intriguers and panic mongers would have long ago built up a 'defence' which would have made a preventive war inevitable. But this 'talk of the Soviet Devil' in the battle for rearmament budgets must not go so far as to encourage him one day to appear in the flesh.

How would it look if the devil were suddenly to appear: that is if the Soviet Union were, in fact, to cross the Rubicon in Korea and thereby provoke a World War?

Through Europe with her industrial potentiality, her numerous ports and her communications, lies the nearest and easiest means of access to the Soviet Union. Therefore the Soviet's first military action would be to occupy Europe and even a portion of the North African coast. However, it is unlikely that the divisions necessary for such a step could be secretly amassed in the Eastern Zone, in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary and in the Balkans. The attack would be launched against an inferior, but none the less prepared, opponent. Assuming that the Soviet Union has a general mobilisation there can be little doubt of its success. But this success would bring the Soviet leaders face to face with their real problems for the first time. Under Soviet conditions an inconceivable military and political organisation would be required in order to defend and control the occupied territories, and at the same time to conduct a war.

The Soviet masses, who have been strictly isolated for years, would move in their millions into the ill-famed, prohibited, tempting, capitalist world. They would surely enjoy being the masters.

Yes, they would feel so happy that the 'Agitprop' would be unable to prevent a noticeable deterioration of morale. The morale of the Red Army was none too high even when defending their own home soil. But, removed from their homes by many thousands of miles to partly hostile, partly enticing surroundings, infected by the inevitable realisation that everything was not so wonderful and exceptional in the 'Workers' Paradise', would it under these circumstances be any higher? This time the Red soldier would not roll to the front in Dodges and jeeps, they would not march in American clothes or boots, they would not

eat powdered eggs, maize, cereals, pork and tinned food from countries overseas. In the sky they would not see 500 to 1,000 of their own aircraft matched against one of the enemy's. This time the partisans would stab them in the back, not their enemies. And the Soviet command would have its policy dictated by a free world, prepared to strike back.

It is more than doubtful whether the Kremlin would consider such a state of affairs worth risking. Its experiments in Korea have not disproved this. There the Western occupation forces abandoned a ruined State, nine-tenths of whose industry lay behind the Iron Curtain, whose 21,000,000 poverty-stricken peasants had to feed 4,000,000 unemployed; a State that was practically without arms, whilst enormous stocks of U.S. arms were being wasted; a State in which the nearby events in China caused just as much illusion as despair. Did it not appear to the Kremlin that the U.S.A. and the free nations had obviously written Korea off as a lost cause, and that it only remained for them to create a *fait accompli*? This, however, proved to be a miscalculation. And it is unlikely for this very reason that they intend to repeat the mistake in Europe.

The political line followed by the Soviet Union towards Germany is the same as that which the Soviet used to lure the Communist proselytes of the National Committee of 1945 into accepting the Oder-Neisse Line. As regards Berlin, the Politbureau of the S.E.D. was still of the opinion in May of this year that the Western position could not be held economically for long, and that eventually the whole city would fall like a ripe apple into the lap of the People's Democracy of the Eastern Zone. This development could, if necessary, be hastened by renewals of the Whit Sunday march. Owing to the panic caused in business circles in Berlin this march caused more damage than could ever have been hoped for. All the same, Berlin is a torch which shines not only in the darkness of the Eastern Zone, but which throws its light deep into the Soviet Union. For this reason they will keep on trying to put it out.

On the whole, however, Soviet policy is still dominated by the dogma that the internal contradictions of the capitalist world will

inevitably and automatically lead to its collapse. The thesis is still believed that the 'ruling classes' have only one way of delaying this collapse: war, war against the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks are still much too scared of such an attack to think of attacking themselves; they are much keener on holding and strengthening their present position.

The 'hot war' can still be avoided. It is a matter of keeping one's nerves in the 'cold war', of resisting all manœuvres of the totalitarians with the utmost toughness, of displaying watchfulness and self-confidence and, above all, of not betraying the principles of justice and freedom of conscience for the sake of tactical advantage. Stalin will not live for a hundred years and the 'Soviet Paradise' is not an empire which will last a thousand. The history of the Soviet Union and of the Communist Party is the best proof that eventually human conscience remains unassailable and will again and again generate 'traitors', renegades and true revolutionaries in all ranks of the power machine. The larger this power machine grows, and the farther it extends itself, the more chances will these forces have. The greatest likelihood, inherent in this system, is that it will destroy itself by its own function. But even if the Western world has no longer the inner strength to meet the threat to freedom (without consciously or unconsciously resorting to a preventive war), nor to develop a new form of community and collaboration for humanity, even though technique and the machinery of power should for centuries triumph over the spirit of freedom, even though the recourse to Sovietism or some other totalitarianism has become inevitable—even then, one can be happier on a sinking ship, than on one which sails with hoisted flags into the harbour of slavery, if one has the knowledge that mankind will, one day, find again its conscience and its soul, and its faith in those things which lie beyond the reach of the secret police.